Remote Chess Academy

7 Keys to VICTORY

GM Igor Smirnov

chess-teacher.com

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Finally, all of my work is only possible due to the inspiration and support of my wife and family. Thank you for this!

Instructions for the Video Course

I would like to give you a few recommendations, which will make your study of the video lessons more effective.

- Focus on the study. Turn off your mobile phone, music, TV, etc.

- Stop (pause) the video lesson sometimes. When you stop the video, you can THINK about an interesting idea and digest it better. It is very important to do it.

- Print the text versions of the video lessons. When you think about different ideas of the course, you will see them at the same time. It is very helpful. After the study of one video lesson, please look through its text version. Pay attention to the enhanced font –it will help you remember all the key ideas.

- Write the important ideas. While studying the video lessons, you will find a lot of useful rules, principles and so on. Also, you will probably make your own conclusions. If you write them, you will remember and classify them better.

- Make pauses. Your brain needs to have some free time to digest new information. Don't try to study everything at once.

- Repeat the lessons. Study the lessons several times. Of course, it is hard to remember a lot of information after a quick acquaintance. So, you need to repeat it sometimes.

Introduction

Hi and welcome into the course "**7 Keys to Victory**". In this course you will learn the essential guidelines for finding the right move in almost any chess position. Does it sound too good to be true? Well, frankly it will not make you a grandmaster, or especially a world champion, but it definitely has enough power to advance your level of chess to about 100-200 rating points above your current level and to bring yourself into the category of expert players.

I am **Igor Smirnov** from the Remote Chess Academy and I'm really excited to start with this chess journey together with you. The 7 keys are the most fundamental rules of chess. There are plenty of rules out there, but if we talk about the most important guidelines to play the chess game, there are not so many; in fact, there are only 7. I call them principles.

If you studied any of my previous courses, such as "The Grand Master Secrets" or "The Grand Master Positional Understanding" or anything like that, then maybe you already know some of these principles. Nevertheless, whether you have already learned some of these principles or not, in any case, this course will be highly useful for you. First of all, there will be a lot of new ideas and, secondly, even if you are already familiar with some of these principles, it's not only important to know that, but also to bring yourself to the level of advanced players.

To finish, let me use an analogy with running. Everybody can run. But if you compare an ordinary person with a world champion or an Olympic champion in running, the Olympic champion has this skill developed to a much greater level. He can run faster and his technique is a lot better. It is the same thing with the chess skills. Even if you already possess a certain skill, for instance, if you possess it at the level of club players, you can still perfect it and bring it to the level of expert players, master players and so on.

That is exactly what we are going to be doing in this course. It's not just a theoretical course, where you will learn a bunch of theoretical ideas. No! These are just 7 key principles, basically, but we will really work them out in detail. There will be a dialogue, asking questions and you will be able to think for yourself and apply the knowledge that you learn right away in practice.

Therefore, at the end of this course, you will not only have learned the 7 key principles of playing the chess game well, but you will also be able to apply them directly in your chess games –right after you finish studying this course. You will learn them while you study the video lessons, you will also be able to practice them in the practical part of the course. And, overall, I'm pretty sure that if you take it seriously, and even if you just learn only a fraction of this information, that will be already enough for you to advance significantly in your chess development.

Now, let's talk about those "7 Keys to Victory" and how they originate. In order to do that, let's go to the checkmate position and, then, we will work it backwards, so we will see what the typical pattern of the chess game is. So, it's not a real chess game, it's just a Scholar's Mate, the fastest way to deliver checkmate. Let's realize, in

general, what's going on and then we will see what the general principles that guide the whole game of chess are.

1.e4 g6 2.Qf3 Bg7 3.Bc4

First of all, I just made these initial, very simple moves; and now White already created the checkmate threat. White wants to capture the f7-pawn and to deliver checkmate. Let's say, Black wants to cover his king, additionally, with the knight. Then, White would want probably to advance the pawn forward to kick away the knight and try to get to that f7-pawn and, therefore, to the king afterwards.

3...**Nf6 4.e5**

All right, that was not a real game; it's just an illustration of how a chess game can possibly come to the end. And now, let's work it backward and see how you should play chess.

First of all, the goal of the chess game is to checkmate the opponent's king. However, you cannot do that directly because the king is covered by a lot of defenders, such as the pawns and the pieces. Therefore, before you get to the king, you have to attack and, possibly capture, all those forces that surround the opponent's king.

They are all potential or existing defenders of the king. That already formulates the goal of the chess game and also the first most important principle of the chess game, which is "**The Principle of Attack**". It says that attacking moves are the best, and if you can attack anything in the opponent's position, you must do it! Because anything, whether it be a pawn, a piece or the king itself, is a good enough target for your attack. That was the first very important takeaway.

Now let's work it backward because you cannot always attack. Let's go to the very beginning of the game and see how the attack was created on the first place. In order to do that, let's focus our attention in one piece for now, just on the f1-bishop, and see how it took part into the attack.

It's just for not distracting our attention to many other different factors. Originally, once the bishop is standing on its original square it is not doing anything. Of course, it is not attacking anything, it has no squares to go to; but when White advances the pawn forward to e4, now the bishop controls the long f1-a6 diagonal: That already makes the chance for this bishop to take a greater part into the attack. If anything, whenever any opponent's pawn or piece appears on this diagonal, the bishop will be able to capture it. Therefore, by allowing the bishop to control a greater quantity of squares, you maximize the chances of this bishop to take part into the attack.

And, in the next moves, once the bishop is advanced further to c4, you realize that now the attacking potential of this bishop become even greater. Now, in addition to its initial diagonal (f1-a6), it starts controlling one more diagonal (a2-g8); and therefore, it doubles the chances of this bishop to take part into the attack. So, if any opponent's piece or pawn or the king ever appears under the fire of the bishop, it would be able to execute the attack, perhaps with the support of the other white pieces, as it happened here with the support of White's queen.

Now, we can conclude, how can we possibly prepare an attack? **You prepare an attack by activating your pieces, by putting them in the positions where they control the greatest quantity of squares: I call this activity.**

That is the second most important principle of the chess game: "The Principle of Activity", which says that, in order to prepare your attack, you need to put your pieces on the positions where they control the greatest quantity of squares. Therefore, there's a greater chance that, sooner or later, an opponent's item, such as a piece, a pawn or the king, appears under the fire of this piece.

To summarize the whole thing, there are only two most essential ideas in the chess game: The first idea is that, in order to win in a chess game, you need to attack; you want to attack the opponent's king, the pawns, the pieces, and actually anything – anything in the opponent's position, you should try to attack and capture.

If you can't attack right away; then you need to prepare it by increasing the activity of your pieces and, in other words, by putting them in the positions where they can attack the greatest quantity of squares. By the way, the same thing happens –as you can notice– with the white queen. Originally it was on d1, doing nothing, then it went to f3, where it was starting to control a number of squares, so it could also take part into the attack.

So, those are the two most important principles of the chess game: "**The Principle of Attack**" and "**the Principle of Activity**". Essentially, that's it! You already know the entire chess strategy. But, of course, it's not the end of the story because there are different situations and different ways to execute these two most fundamental ideas of the chess game. We will talk about them in the next lessons and we'll see what those keys are and how exactly we can follow these two most essential ideas of the chess game.

I'm looking forward to talk to you in the lesson #1, where we will discuss the first key to victory.

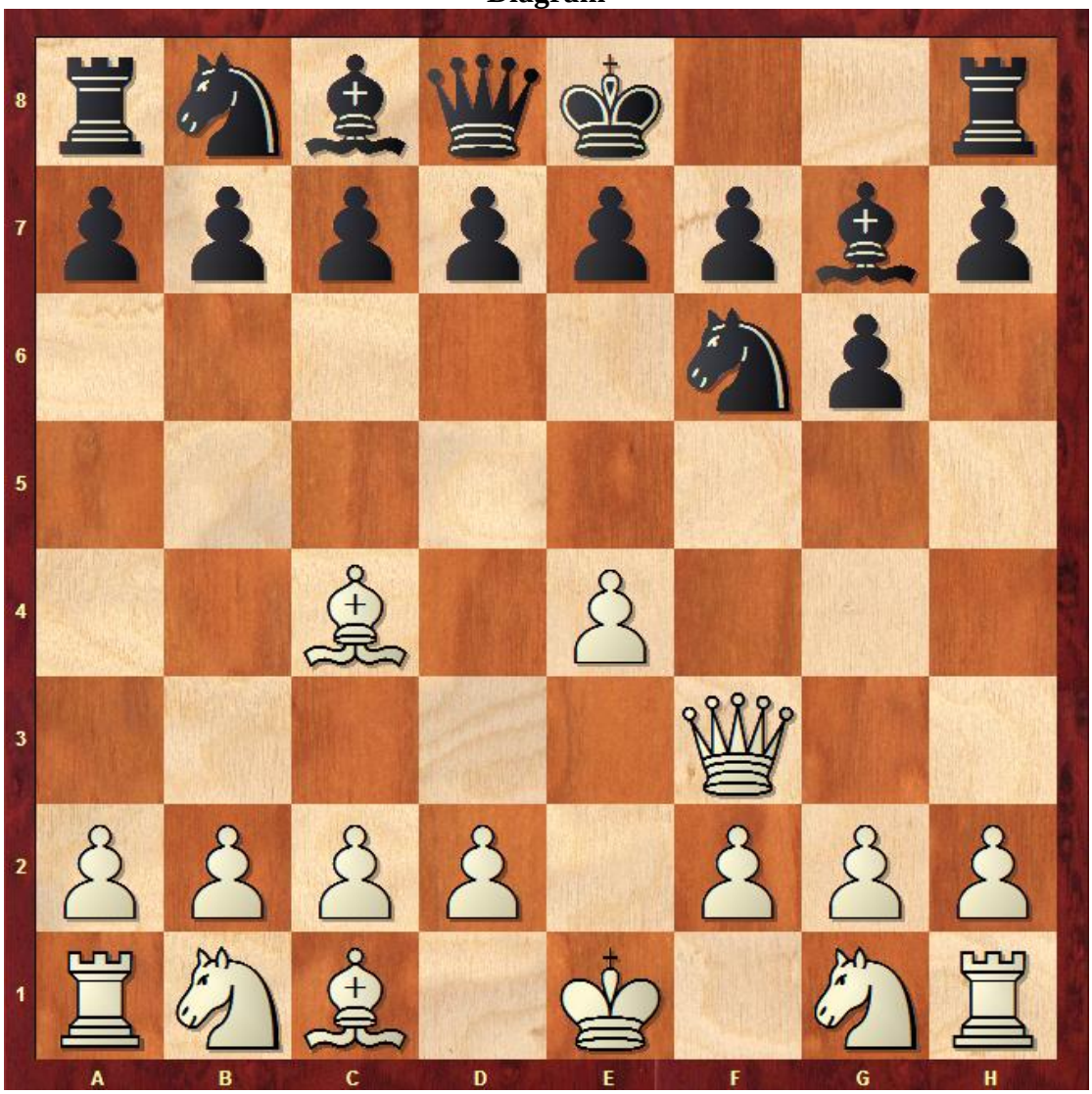
Lesson 1 - The Key to Breakthrough

Welcome into the first key of victory. This lesson is called "**The Key to Breakthrough**". We will analyze the first and most important principle of playing the game of chess. In fact, you already know this because we've just discussed it. This is "The Principle of Attack".

It is a very straightforward idea. It means that **if you can attack, you should do it**. Let's just quickly review the example that we have already seen in previous lessons, just to realize what the purpose of the attack is. We are going to start from this previous example and, then, we'll go to more complex levels –up to the level of the top grandmasters.

1.e4 g6 2.Qf3 Bg7 3.Bc4 Nf6

Diagram



White to play

First of all, we notice that the first goal is to attack the opponent's king; like in this position, White is going to checkmate it. The next goal is to capture a certain material, as some defenders of the king, such as the pawns or the f6-knight which can cover the king; 3…Nf6 4.e5, we can attack and grab this knight; and that is the third goal. As you can see, we are willing to attack the king, the pawn or the knight.

We are willing to either checkmate the opponent's king or to grab certain material. In addition to that, there is one more reason for making attacking moves. In this particular position that we have now, even though it is imaginary, right now the knight cannot go away because the black king will be checkmated after Qxf7. Let's take a step back and imagine that the knight can go back as well.

4.Ne2 [4.e5] **4...0–0 5.e5**

If White pushes the pawn to e5, now the knight can retreat, it actually has to retreat. That is the first reason for making attacking moves: It may force the opponent to decrease his activity, to go back, to retreat, to worsen his position to some extent. After pushing the pawn to e5, the knight will be forced to go back to e8. That is certainly an advantage for White, because, here on f6, the knight was standing on an active square; it was controlling a lot of squares of the chessboard.

5...Ne8

After it has to retreat back to e8, we see that it's totally locked there. It doesn't have any square to go to and it's totally passive. We said that the second most essential principle from the main principles of playing the game of chess is the "**Principle of activity**". It means that you've got to put your pieces in the squares where they control the greatest quantity of squares on the chessboard. Therefore, if you can decrease the activity of your opponent, force him to place his pieces on passive positions; this is your accomplishment.

To quickly summarize it, there are 3 main goals for the attack. The first goal would be to attack the opponent's king, hopefully to checkmate it. The second goal is to attack the opponent's material, such as the pawns or the pieces. The third goal is to gain in activity, to force the opponent to go back: Those are the 3 main goals of the attack.

Now, let's think of how you can find the right attacking moves. Let's take a few steps back, before 5.e5 Ne8, and realize exactly how you should be thinking during a game of chess, so that you can find attacking moves. As you already know, we are going to attack some objects in the opponent's position.

Naturally, at the very beginning of the game, you can notice that all of the opponent's pieces are standing on those 2 last ranks. Even though, in the following moves, the opponent will start bringing his pieces forward, they will still, in most of the cases, be situated on his half of the board: on the last 4 ranks of the chessboard.

Therefore, if you wish to attack opponent's pieces or pawns or his king, in any case you need to attack some objects on the opponent's half of the board. In order to find an attacking move, you need to focus your attention on this half of the board and ask yourself how you can play there or attack something there on the opponent's territory.

That's exactly what White did in this particular example by pushing his pawn forward from e4 to e5. So, White pushed it forward and attacked something on the opponent's half of the board. That is the first most important principle of thinking during a game of chess. You look at the opponent's half of the board and you think: How can I make some damage there?

All right, aside of that, there is one more secondary helpful idea for finding attacking moves. Let's just quickly review, once again, the kinds of attacking moves and the goals of the attack. We said that there are only a few goals and, therefore, you can easily recognize what kind of attacking moves actually exist.

The first thing is that we want to attack the opponent's king. If we attack it, it means that, usually, we make a check. That is the first forcing move, as we call it. It forces the opponent to defend, to do something about it. So, the first kind of forcing move is a check.

Now, imagine that Black ignores the threat to the f6-knight; and so, in the next move, White will be able to capture it. This is the second kind of forcing move: capture. Capture the opponent's knight, pawn or anything.

The third kind of attacking moves –those are just attacking moves– is exactly like what White did by moving the pawn from e4 to e5, attacking the opponent's knight. It does not capture it, but it attacks it and forces the opponent to retreat –to go back and to defend. Those are the 3 kinds of attacking moves: check, capture and forcing attacking moves.

Just to summarize the whole thing: In order to find attacking moves, you need to keep in mind those 2 ideas: The first idea is that you usually need to **go to the opponent's half of the board** or, at least, **to attack the opponent's half of the board**.

The second one is that, mostly, you need to pay attention to forcing moves, which are: to attack the king with a check, to attack a piece with a capture or just an attacking move. If you keep in mind just 2 little ideas, the idea of going to the opponent's half of the board and forcing moves, you will be able to find attacking moves easily in all the positions. Now, let's go to more complex, practical examples and see how this general theory works in practice.

Ratmir Kholmov - Mikhail Tal [D44]
Simul Riga LAT, 1949

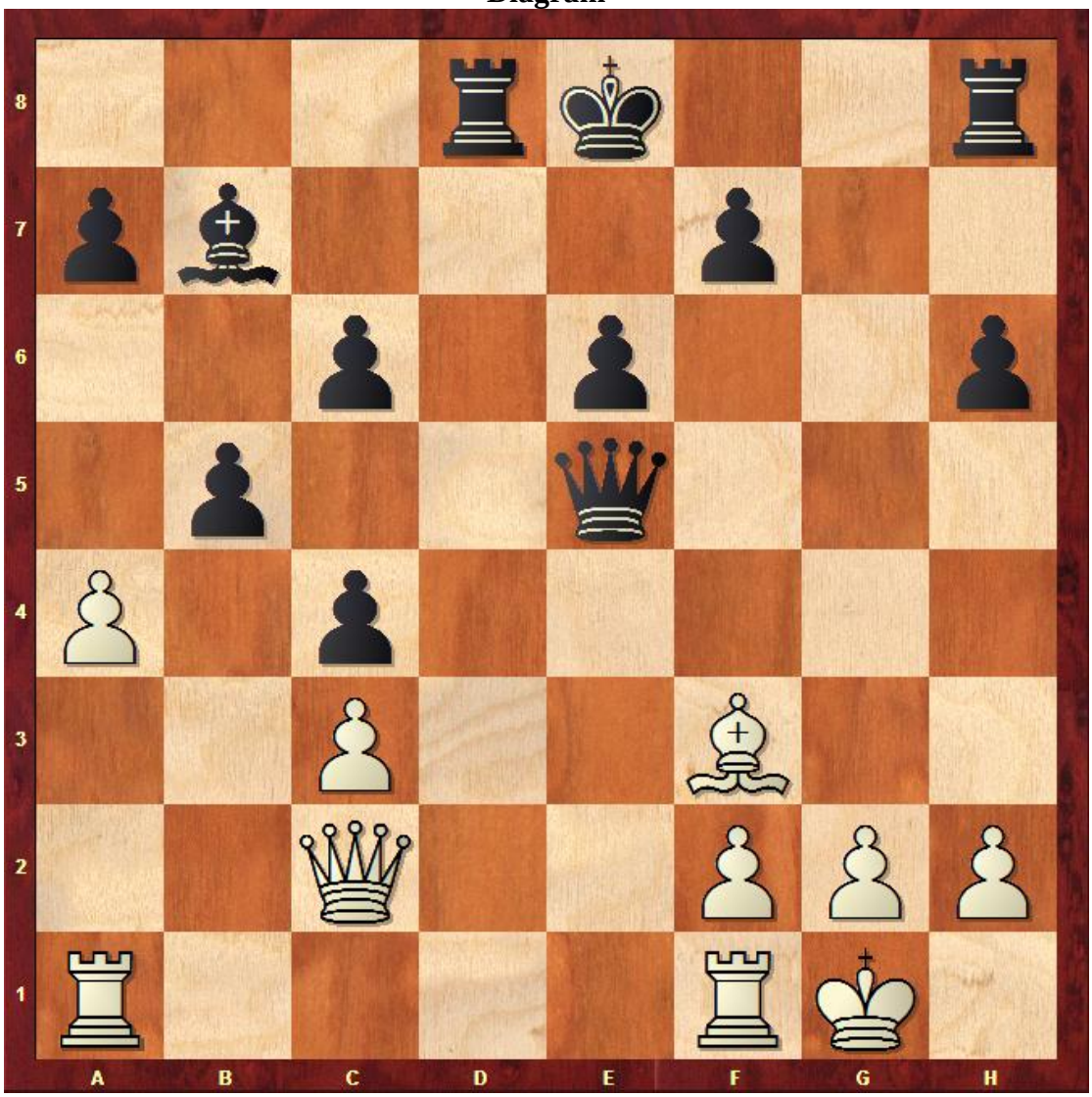
Here is the first practical example. Black's player is Mikhail Tal, a former World Champion and one of the greatest masters of the attack in the history of chess. The white player is Kholmov, who is also a strong GM.

1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 c6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.exf6 Bb4 10.Be2 Qxf6 11.0–0 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Nd7 13.a4 Bb7 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Qxe5 16.Bf3 Rd8 17.Qc2

It is Black to play; and you may think about this for a second and try to remind yourself: What is the move that I would play here? Of course, you know that the first rule of chess says that if you can attack, you must do it. Your first idea should always be thinking about the attack. And we know how to do that.

You have to focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board and ask yourself: How can I move my pieces forward into the opponent's half of the board and take or attack something there? If you ask yourself this question, then you can easily find the right move.

Diagram



Black to play

17...Rd3

The rook goes inside White's camp and starts attacking something. Particularly, it attacks White's pawn on c3. If White protected this pawn somehow, by playing Rac1, for instance, even though at the moment Black wouldn't gain anything particular; you could see the great difference that happened over the last move in the position. Black managed to activate his rook, to bring it forward, where it was more active than it

used to be; while White had to use his rook for just a passive defensive role, where it does nothing but only protect that little pawn on c3. In that case, that would help Black gain in activity and, therefore, he managed to get a certain advantage out of his attack. [17...a6 18.Rfe1]

18.axb5

In the actual game, instead of playing Rac1, White decided to grab Black's pawn on b5. And here Black found another brilliant attacking move; he actually made a forcing move. [18.Rac1]

18...Rxf3

Remember we've always got to make the check, capture and attack. Here, Black found a capture that was really advantageous for him. It turns out that, by playing Rd3, Black did not only attack the c3-pawn, but he was also preparing an attack to White's king, starting with that sacrifice, Rxf3. White missed that idea and Black managed to execute it, to attack White's king, which is the best thing that you can do because it will win the game.

19.Rxa7 [19.gxf3 Rg8+ 20.Kh1 cxb5 21.Qd1 Qf4.

Here, it turns out that if White just grabs the rook, what happens next? Black will continue the attack, Rg8+, the king will go away and Black will recapture the pawn on b5; because that enables Black to grab this f3-pawn in the next move. All of a sudden, White is defenseless. If the queen tries to protect the pawn with Qd1, Black can just continue the attack on that pawn and, now, there is simply no defense against Bxf3; and there is going be a checkmate. In this game, you can see all those ideas that we discussed in theory, and you can notice how they work in practice.]

Let's just review this whole game quickly. Once again, pay attention to the way of thinking, to find the right attacking moves. **You focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board and you ask yourself what forcing attacking moves you can play there**.

With that in mind, Black played Rd3, going into White's half of the board, attacking a pawn and, after that, he made a forcing move, Rxf3 –capture. He captured something on White's territory. After that, Black continued to attack White's king with a check (Rg8+), and in the next move, cxb5, with an attack on White's king. And finally, after Qd1, Black went forward with Qf4, threatening the pawn; and White was defenseless.

That shows the right way of thinking; and you can see that Tal –the greatest master of the attack– played this great game demolishing his opponent. But if you understand the right way of thinking, you can see that it's so easy for you to be the same great master of the attack.

19...Qxb5 20.gxf3 Qg5+ 21.Kh1 Rg8 0–1

Paul Keres – Viacheslav Ragozin [D35]
Semmering/Baden Semmering/Baden AUT (9), 19.09.1937

Here is another task for you, the game between Keres and Ragozin, two Grandmasters.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.g3 dxc4 5.Qa4+ Nc6 6.Bg2 Bd7 7.Qxc4 Nb4 8.Qb3 c5 9.Nf3 Bc6 10.0–0 cxd4 11.Rd1 Qa5 12.Nxd4 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 Be7 14.a3 0–0 15.Bd2 Nc6 16.Nxc6 bxc6

It is White to play. Think about this position and try to find the attacking move for White here. In the actual game, White did not find the right move; even though, if you understand how to think properly, it's pretty odd because it's really the first move that you should be considering in this position. By the way, if you ask yourself how you can go into the opponent's half of the board; there is actually only one way possible for White to play here. That is the Qb7move.

Diagram

White to play

17.Qc4

[17.Qb7. This is the only way for White to go into the opponent's camp, and that is the attacking move because it attacks both the e7-bishop and the c6-pawn. Since Black cannot protect both of those objects simultaneously, in the next move, White will be able to grab one of them. Most likely, Black would protect the bishop and, therefore, White would simply collect the pawn.

We will not analyze this game until the end; it was a long game. As I said, in the actual game, actually, White missed this attacking opportunity, even though he was a strong Grandmaster. Now, you can see that if you understand the right way of thinking, it's so easy to find the proper attacking moves.]

17...Qb6 18.b4 a5 19.Na4 Qb5 20.Qxb5 cxb5 21.Nb6 Ra6 22.bxa5 Bd8 23.Bb4 Re8 24.Rd6 Bc7 25.Rc6 Nd5 26.e4 Nxb4 27.axb4 Be5 28.Rd1 g6 29.Rc5 Bf6 30.Nd7 Be7 31.Rxb5 Raa8 32.Rb7 Ra6 33.Nb8 Ra8 34.Nc6 Bf8 35.b5 Rec8 36.a6 Bc5 37.Rdd7 Rf8 38.a7 h5 39.Rb8 Kg7 40.b6 1–0

Smerdon, David (2257) – Uebel, Konrad (1646) [B53]
Bullwinkle CC-ch Brisbane (3), 02.02.2002

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Nc6 5.Bb5 Nf6 6.Nc3 e6

Diagram

White to play

It's White to play. How would you play here as White? Is there any way for you to start an attack right here? You know that we want to push forward, to move our pieces or pawns forward and attack something in the opponent's position; and, of course, we pay attention to forcing moves mostly.

By the way, how about the move Bxc6? Is this a forcing move? Yes, it is a forcing move because it's check. But it won't give you an advantage, so you don't checkmate the opponent's king, you don't win any material and you don't gain anything in terms of activity. Therefore, we play the attacking or forcing moves only if they give you a certain advantage, otherwise, there's no need to play that. Therefore, Bxc6 isn't a good move to play here.

One more way for White to go forward to the opponent's half of the board is e5; and that was exactly what he played in the actual game; then to attack the opponent's knight, so he forces the opponent to do something about that.

Now, first of all, let's check what would happen if White simply took the pawn, which is the most obvious way to react. Now White would probably need to do something about his queen, so he would play Qxd8, but it has to be captured by the king because the knight is pinned. After that, White has just lost the pawn; he has to take it back.

So, he first needs to eliminate the defender of that e5-pawn and, in the next move, to capture it. Now you can evaluate the situation at the end of this line. White has taken the two pawns on Black's camp, Black's king is in a dangerous position, and therefore, even though it's not the end of the game, of course, White is in a more favorable situation. Then, in the actual game, Black didn't want to do that, so let's take some steps back to the original game.

7.e5 Nd5

In the actual game, after White pushed his pawn forward to e5, Black instead of capturing this pawn, he moved his knight from the attacked square and played Nd5. Here's a question for you: At this point White can take Black's d5-knight and after Black recaptures, grab that pawn with the queen. Should White go for that line? What do you think?

Here, it is important to mention one very straightforward chess rule. It says: If you can take something, do it! If you can grab the opponent's material, that's great! Remember that it is one of the most essential ideas in the chess game –the idea of the attack. You should be attacking the opponent's king and capturing his pawns and pieces.

Whatever material advantage you can gain is great. By the way, one note to be made. When I say, if you can take something, do it, I'm talking about winning the material. For instance, with the Bxc6 move, you also capture something, but you don't win any material advantage; it's only an exchange because the opponent recaptures that bishop. That is why that exchange is useless for White. You should only take if you can win the material, such as, after the exchange on d5. [7...dxe5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.Bxc6 bxc6 10.Nxe5; 7...Ng8; 7...Ng8]

8.Nxd5 exd5

After pawn takes, here you can grab this pawn back by playing

9.Qxd5

That's awesome. In addition to winning the pawn, White is now threatening to grab the knight on c6 and to win one more pawn after that exchange. So, Black protected it with

9...Qc7

Now there is a little question for you. Should White be taking the pawn on d6? Think. Remember that we should grab the opponent's material if we could win it, but we should not just trade off pieces without any reason. In that case, White would take on d6, Black would then recapture with his bishop, so it would not win the material. Therefore, instead of doing that, White increased the pressure by moving

10.Bf4

White is attacking once again, and now, he's really threatening to grab that pawn on d6 in the next move. Black replied with [10.exd6 Bxd6]

10...Be6

threatening White's queen. Here, although at first sight, it looks like the queen should go back, there is instead a better thing that White can do. Instead of that, you can apply the same way of thinking and ask yourself what kind of attacking moves you can play in the opponent's half of the board. In that case, White can actually make a counterblow. White can grab that pawn on d6 to carry out his threat because that pawn in turn would attack Black's queen.

Here is another important remark to be made. If we think about Black's move Be6, was that an attacking move or not? At first sight, it was because it really attacked White's queen. But remember we talked about the power of attacking moves; they should be giving you a certain advantage. Either you attack the opponent's king or his material or you gain in activity.

When we talk about a gain in activity, it means that you move your pieces forward and attack your opponent while, at the same time, you force your opponent's pieces to go back to more passive positions. In this case, if Black played Be6, and that forced White's queen to go back somewhere to e4, for instance; we would say that Be6 was really an attacking move; it forced White to retreat, to do something that he did not want to. But in this case, Be6 was useless because, actually, White was not forced to retreat; he could make a counterblow instead. That is what White did. He took the knight on c6 first. [10...dxe5 11.Bxe5]

11.Bxc6+ [11.exd6 Qa5+; 11.Qe4] **11...bxc6 12.exd6**

Then he grabbed that pawn on d6, with a counterattack on Black's queen. Therefore, we might just conclude that Be6 was not effective. This is an important remark to remember. You should be making attacking moves, that's true, but you should be only making them if they provide you with a certain advantage. Otherwise, these attacking moves would simply not work. You should not be doing that; you should instead prepare a more powerful attack for the future. Let's just finalize this forcing line.

12...cxd5

Black captured White's queen.

13.dxc7+-

White did the same with Black's counterpart. Here we can just evaluate the resulting position. White is two pawns up, one of those extra pawns is the strong passed pawn on c7, supported by the f4-bishop; and White has a clearly winning position, thanks to his material advantage. Eventually, he won this game within a couple of moves. We will not observe this game to the end.

13...Bc5 14.0–0 0–0 15.a4 a5 16.Rad1 Rfc8 17.Nd4 Bd7 18.Nb5 Bxb5 19.axb5 Bb6 20.Rxd5 Bxc7 21.Bxc7 Rxc7 22.Rfd1 h6 23.c3 1–0

Let's draw the final conclusion about the first key of victory –which is the attack. First of all, a very straightforward rule says that **attacking moves are the best**. If you can attack, do it! How do you find attacking moves? When it's your turn, first of all, you need to focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board, and ask yourself this magical question: How can I go forward to the opponent's half of the board and take or attack something there?

It's important to notice here that when going to the opponent's half of the board, you are looking for a certain advantage that you can gain. It's not that you just go there for the sake of going there. No! You want to gain a certain particular advantage. What kind of advantage can it be? Well, there are only a few possible targets for your attack.

The first target is the opponent's king. The next target is maybe that you want to attack an opponent's piece or pawn; and that is the material factor. The third possible target is when you want to gain in activity. When you push your piece or pawn forward (for instance with 7.e5), you force the opponent to retreat. Black will just retreat back to g8. That's the exact example of gain in activity.

Push your pawn forward and you force your opponent to go back. That is how you gain a greater advantage in activity. That is the third goal of the attack. So, you can attack the opponent's king, you can attack the opponent's material or you can gain in activity. Those are the 3 goals of your attack, the 3 possible advantages that your attack can bring to you.

It's also important to notice that, often times, the attacking moves are also forcing moves. They force a certain particular reply from your opponent. The third kind of forcing moves that we know are checks, captures and attacking moves. Always look for this kind of things and you will be able to find strong attacking moves.

Once again, the most critical aspect that you should remember out of this lesson, the key takeaway, is the right way of thinking for finding attacking moves. When it's your turn, you should, first of all, check if you have an effective attacking move. Then, you focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board, and you ask yourself what checks or attacks you can play there.

In the last position, after 6.Nc3 e6, in fact, there were only 2 essential attacking moves, namely Bxc6+ and pawn to e5. Bxc6+ was just an exchange –Black will recapture and it will not give you an advantage. Therefore, White pushed the pawn to e5, which was enough to provide him with the winning advantage, just within a few moves. That's the way to go. You don't always have an effective attacking move, but

if you have it, just do it! If you don't have an effective attacking move, we'll talk about those situations in the following lessons.

Conclusions

1. If you can attack – do it.

2. Goals of the attack:

- King
- Material (pawns, pieces)
- Activity

3. Forcing moves:

- Check
- Capture
- Attacking move

4. "How can I go the opponent's half of the board and take or attack something there?"

5. If you can take (win) material – do it.

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Lesson 2 - The Most Important Chess Rule

Dolezal, Jiri (2255) – Volak, Michal (2175) [E69]
CZE-chTJ 0102 Czechia (1), 2002

Welcome into the second lesson called "The Most Important Chess Rule". In the first lesson of this video course, we were talking about the importance of the attack. However, there is not always an attacking move at your disposal. For instance, in the starting position of the chess game, definitely there is no way for the attack.

Even if we make one move or a couple of moves, there would still be no options for you on how you can possibly damage your opponent. What should you do in such cases? By the way, this is the most common situation in the chess game because, even though the attack is the greatest thing you can do, more often than not, there is no direct way for an attack.

So, here comes "**The Principle of the Least Active Piece**". It says: Find the piece which is the least active and activate it, improve its position. It's very straightforward and, by following this single important chess principle, you can play a lot of moves within the chess game without really a necessity to think hard about that.

1.d4 Nf6

Like in this position, for instance. Well, we can notice that most of White's pieces are pretty bad. Still, it's not totally true for each of them. For example, White's c1-bishop is already quite active –it controls a long diagonal–, while White's knights are totally passive, they are not doing anything, just as well as the other pieces. But, for the knights, the good thing is that you can bring them into play in one move. That's exactly what we should be doing and that is why White played

2.Nf3

By the way, here we are analyzing a game between amateur players; they're both rated around 2200. I just wanted to take an example from an ordinary game, not from the world top level players, so that you can relate to it and see: What are the good things that amateur players (or club players) do? And, what are the mistakes that they make?

2...g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.g3

Here are the results of one important remark to be made. I'm talking about the pieces as you may notice. I'm saying that you need to find the least active piece and activate it. Does that mean that you should never move your pawns? Not exactly. Just as you can see in this position, if White wants to bring his f1-bishop into play, there's no way to do that other than moving a pawn.

That is what he did by pushing the pawn to g3, and therefore preparing the development of the bishop to g2. And a similar thing happened with the dark-squared bishop. This bishop was activated by moving the pawn to d4, which enabled the bishop to be developed along the c1-h6 diagonal. Therefore, we will be making pawn

moves from time to time, but the purpose of those pawn moves would still be rather to activate your pieces.

4...d6 5.Bg2

By the way, you can see that the interesting thing about this "**Principle of the Least Active Piece**" is that almost all of White's moves are following just this one principle alone.

5...0–0 6.0–0

The castle help you bring the rook into play and also bring your king into safety, but the primary purpose is just to help your rook take active part in the following stage of the game. By the way, you may be wondering: Why do we have to come out with this standalone principle for a simple thing that usually people call development?

They say that, in an opening, you need to develop your pieces. That is exactly true, but the purpose of stating the principle is that it is actually a wider truth. It's not only for the opening stage; it's for the entire game. At any stage of the game, you can follow “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” and when you follow it in an opening, yes, it's called development. But you can, as well, follow it in the middlegame and in the endgame. It's really a universal thing.

6...c6

All right, now let me ask you a question: How would you play here as White? There are some pieces you need to develop, like your knight or your bishop, or maybe your queen. So, which piece would you develop now? The answer to that question once again lies into “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”: **Find the piece which is the least active and you move it!**

In the current position, you can see that the c1-bishop already controls a long diagonal; the queen already has some scope of activity, even if that is not huge, and only the knight is doing absolutely nothing in its initial square. Therefore, you've got to move the knight. That also brings us to one more common rule of the chess game, which states that you should develop knights before bishops. That is a common rule stated by the second World Champion, Lasker, long time ago, but now, you can see that it's only a consequence of “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”.

7.Nc3 Qc7 8.h3

What do you think about this move? Is it good, bad or normal? Well, we said that in the opening, you need to follow “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”, therefore, to develop your pieces. Pawn moves are good when they prepare or support your development. In this case, by moving h3, we're not truly preparing any kind of development for White. That is why we may say that it is rather a waste of time.

It's not that it damages White's position too much, it doesn't, but still it just wastes a little bit of time. So, White could have just gone ahead and, instead, he does all those moves that he should do without moving the pawn to h3.

8...Nbd7 9.e4

It's just to establish a better control on the center.

9...e5 10.Be3

finally, developing the bishop.

10...Re8

Now it is White to play. How would you play here as White? A lot of players here would start thinking what to do about those central pawns, like whether White should be taking on e5 or, maybe, he should push his pawn to d5 or do anything else. But now, you know that you should be focusing on another thing in the opening. In the opening, just as well as often times throughout the whole game, you should be focusing on "The Principle of the Least Active Piece". So far, White has already brought all of his minor pieces into play and now it is time for the heavy pieces –the queen and the rooks– to be activated. Therefore, White played with his queen to c2.

11.Qc2

In general, if you always keep following "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" in the opening stage, you can come up with a better plan of actions for an opening, for any opening that is played. Just like in this game, you may notice that, first of all, White developed his minor pieces, the knights and bishops, those are the easiest pieces to be developed –you can do that quickly. After that, you also castle your king; that is the next thing that you do.

Often times, it goes along the way of developing the minor pieces. And, finally, at the last stage, you develop your heavy pieces, the queen and the rooks. Why do you do that last of all? First of all, as you may have noticed earlier, there is no way to develop this rook from a1 to bring it somewhere into play before you develop the other pieces, such as the b1-knight, the c1-bishop or the queen. So, you've got to move your pieces out of the way of your rook before you can move it somewhere.

That is why you have to develop it last of all. There is also one more reason: the heavy pieces are more valuable. If you bring them into play too early, they can be attacked by the opponent. That is why you have to be more cautious when moving your heavy pieces into an active play too early.

So, once again, remember this plan of actions for the opening, for any opening that you play: 1) Develop minor pieces. 2) Castle. 3) Connect the rooks. When I say connect the rooks, it means that you move your queen, like in this game, when White moved Qc2; which establishes the connection between both of your rooks, so they somewhat look at each other; they are connected.

After doing so, you may say that the opening is finished for you because you performed the main opening tasks and you developed almost all of your pieces.

11...Nf8

Now it's White to play. What would you play here? There's one more rule that you may remember: You should move the piece that has not made any move yet. It's just one more reminder for you to follow "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" because, usually, the piece which is not moved yet in the game is the least active piece –it isn't taking any part in the play.

And in this game, if you ask yourself: Which of my pieces has not made any move yet? You'll notice that rook on a1; and therefore, it's time to bring it into play.

12.Rad1 Be6

It attacks the pawn on c4, so White should protect it.

13.b3 Rad8

What should White be activating here? Very often, after you develop all of your minor pieces, you move the queen to connect the rooks. After that, often times, you also need to bring your rooks into the center because, even though the f1-rook already made one move when White did his castling, it is still standing on f1, it's not doing anything really.

Therefore, very often, we need to bring the rooks into the central lines because, usually, both players are fighting for the control over the central squares, as we can see in this example. There is some tension between the central pawns and, therefore, there is a greater chance that the central lines will be opened down the road. In order to prepare yourself for that situation, it is advisable to place your rooks on the central lines.

Diagram

White's turn

The next question is: How can you activate your f1-rook? There are a couple of options. The most straightforward option –and a good one– would be to play just Rfe1; that would be a good move indeed. In the actual game, White did a different thing. He played

14.Rd2

By doing so, he is preparing to double rooks along the d-file, which is also a good idea. Here, let me make another useful remark for you to remember. In the opening, there is a rule that says: "**Do not move the same piece twice**". I hope that now it is pretty clear for you that, in fact, it's not even a standalone rule; it's just the same "Principle of the Least Active Piece", because, moving the least active piece means that if you have such a piece, like this f1-rook, then you should take care of that rook instead of making a second move of the rook which was already developed.

Generally speaking, you should not be moving the same piece twice; instead of that, you should activate the least active piece –the piece which has not made any moves

yet. But, in this game, the Rd2 move is totally fine because the purpose of this move is only to bring the f1-rook into play. So, White moved Rd2 not because he wants to do anything about that rook on d2: He wants to bring the least active piece into play; and that is why it is a good move.

Finally, in this position (before Rd2), I've just told you that there are some good things that White could do. White could play Rfe1, which is a good option, or White could play Rd2 and, then, double rooks along the d-file. Which move is the best? I can tell you that both of them are good.

Chess is not a mathematical task where there is only one correct solution. Very often, during a game of chess, there are many moves and all of them are fine. So, do not overcomplicate the situation for yourself because we know that there are some players who always really try to figure out what the best move is. They have to think hard for a long time, trying to find the answer.

Do not overcomplicate the situation for yourself. Just play normal moves and, if you know the principle, just follow it. Often times, there are many ways for you to follow the same correct principle. As in this position, both moves for White's rooks would be fine. In the game, he chose to play Rd2. [14.Rfe1]

14...h6

Black replied with h6. White continued with his plan, moving

15.Rfd1 b6

And here, there was a direct way for White to start attacking something. Remember, we've talked about that in the previous lesson. You focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board and ask yourself: How can I attack or take something there? That is exactly what White did in this position. Once all of White's pieces are developed, it's really time to start the attack.

16.dxe5 dxe5

He captured the e5-pawn and he noticed that if he traded off all of the rooks on d8,

17.Rxd8 Rxd8 18.Rxd8 Qxd8

that would leave Black's e5-pawn unprotected. Therefore, in the next move, White could just grab it.

19.Nxe5

White won a pawn which is a material advantage and, later on, he won the entire game. You can notice that, in the entire game that we've just analyzed, White simply followed “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” at every move. That is why I say that it is the most common, most important rule of chess because it works probably more often than anything else on chess.

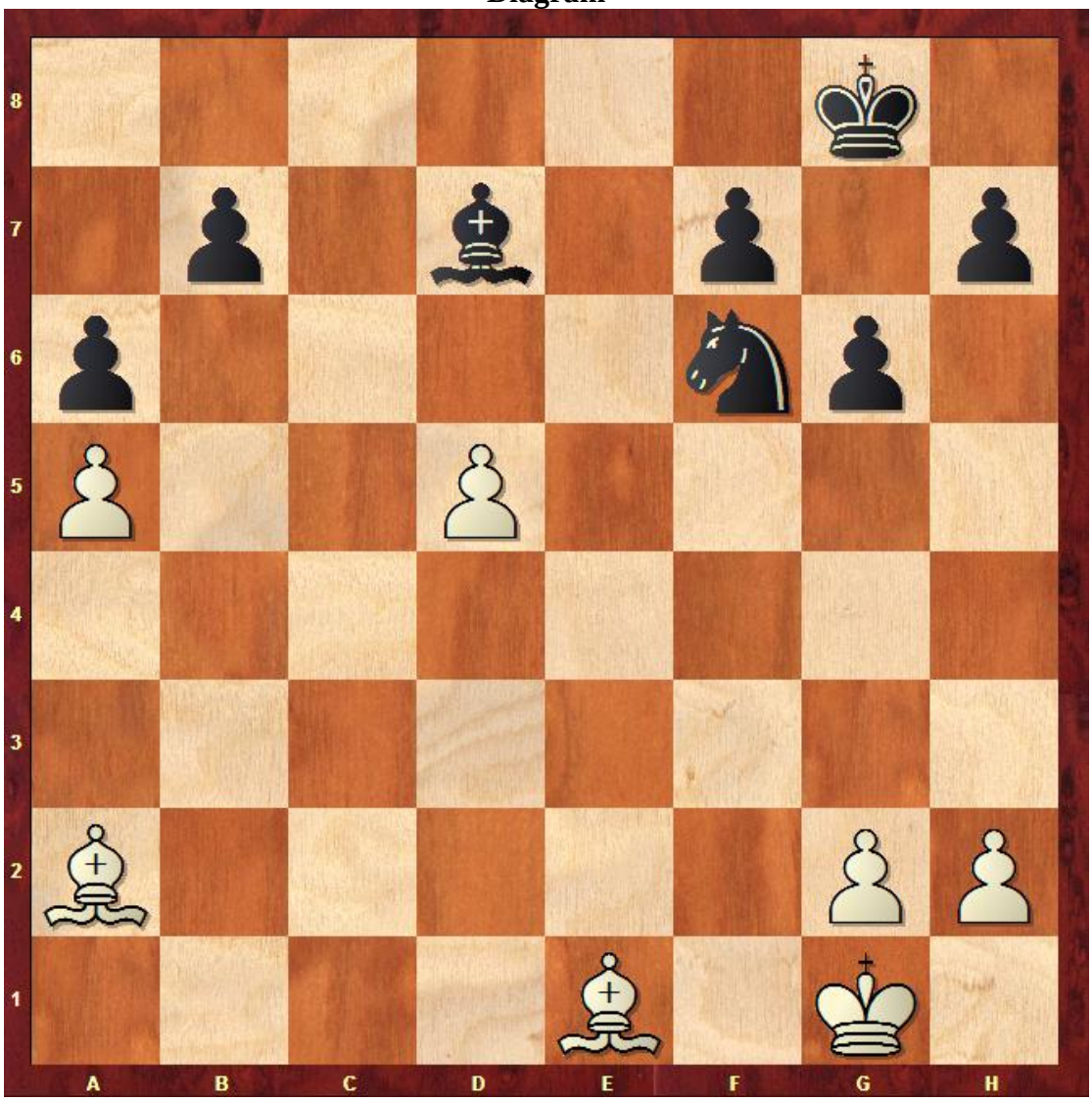
19...Qe8 20.Nxc6 Qxc6 21.e5 Qc8 22.exf6 Bxf6 23.Bxh6 Bxh3 24.Nd5 Nh7 25.Qe4 Bxg2 26.Kxg2 Qd7 27.Qf4 Qd8 28.Qf3 Bg7 29.Bxg7 Kxg7 30.Qc3+ Kg8 31.Qe5 Qg5 32.Qb8+ Kg7 33.Qxa7 Qf5 34.Qxb6 Ng5 35.Qd4+ f6 36.Nf4 1–0

Donner, Jan Hein (2500) – Velimirovic, Dragoljub (2490) [A77]
Capablanca Memorial Havana (3), 1971

Here is another game between Donner and Velimirovic, two strong Grandmasters. In the previous example, we have seen how "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" works in the opening and in the middlegame, but I've also told you that this is a universal principle that works in the endgame just as well. It works throughout the whole game.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 0–0 6.Be2 d6 7.Nf3 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5 Re8 10.Nd2 a6 11.a4 Nbd7 12.Re1 Rb8 13.Bf1 Ne5 14.f4 Neg4 15.Nf3 c4 16.a5 Qc7 17.e5 Qc5+ 18.Qd4 Qxd4+ 19.Nxd4 dxe5 20.fxe5 Nh5 21.Nf3 Nxe5 22.Nxe5 Bxe5 23.Be3 Bd7 24.Bxc4 Rbc8 25.Ba2 Rxc3 26.bxc3 Bxc3 27.Bf2 Rxe1+ 28.Rxe1 Bxe1 29.Bxe1 Nf6

Diagram



White's turn

Let's take a look at this example, which is already an endgame, but you can still apply just the same principle to find the right moves. How would you play here as White? Once again, you can think about "The Principle of the Least Active Piece". Here we can see that White has only 3 pieces: 2 bishops and the king. And, while the bishops are already doing some work –they're already controlling a number of squares–, the king is totally passive. Therefore, it is really time for White to bring the king into play; and that is exactly what he did by playing

30.Kf2

There is a general rule which says: In an endgame, **bring your king into play (centralize it).** But, as you can see, there is nothing new for you here because it's just "The Principle of the Least Active Piece".

30...Bf5 31.Ke3

In the middlegame and in the opening, you've got to be careful with your king because, if you activate it, it can be checkmated by the opponent. But in an endgame, the opponent has too few pieces left on the board and there is no chance for him to checkmate your king; therefore, it becomes an active piece and you need to activate it just as you do with any other piece that you have.

31...Be4

attacking two of White's pawns. White continued with

32.Kd4

supporting the d5-pawn.

32...Bxg2

Black captured the pawn. It was probably unnecessary for White to sacrifice that g2-pawn, but anyway, he did that and, actually, it still worked fine because White took this time to do something very useful to activate his king.

33.Ke5

He went forward with his king, also attacking the f6-knight.

33...Kg7 34.Kd6

And the white king goes forward to d6. Now we can see that the king was really brought into play at a very fast pace. He was standing on g1, doing nothing, and now it's super active on the d6-square, where it's ready to go to c7 and where it can attack the black pawns on the queenside. It can also support the advancement of the white passed pawn on the d-file and, all in all, this king is now doing a great job.

34...Kf8

What would you play here? In general, what should White be doing right now? It's all the same stuff, “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”! The king is already active, but now it cannot go forward anymore because it has to protect the d5-pawn, which is attacked by two of Black's minor pieces. Therefore, it's time for White to care about the rest of his pieces. The a2-bishop is also tied to the defense of the d5-pawn, so there is not much you can do about that bishop. But, the e1-bishop definitely can be moved forward. In general, that's what White should be doing.

However, right now there is a tactical problem because, if you move the bishop somewhere, in the majority of the cases, Black would be able to reply with Ne4, with a double attack on White's king and also on lots of the squares on White's camp. As you can see, those are the squares where White's dark-squared bishop can go to.

That is why White definitely wants to be cautious, not to lose the bishop due to a double attack. In one of those cases, if Black's knight jumped to c3, ultimately, that

would also hit the other bishop on a2. All in all, White decided to protect himself from those tactical threats. He played

35.Bb3 g5 36.Bg3

activating the dark-squared bishop.

36...Ke8 37.Be5

Now the bishop was brought from e1 to e5 and became really active.

37...Nd7

Here, of course, we don't want to move back; generally we want to move forward, we want to activate our position. So, White moved the light-squared bishop with

38.Ba4

Now the light-squared bishop became more active as well. Black answered with

38...Bh3

just to protect the d7-knight. Now the knight is pinned. White goes inside with

39.Bf6

also hitting the g5-pawn. Again, Black's knight cannot move, it cannot do anything because it's pinned. In order to protect the g5-pawn, Black played

39...h6

Now you can notice that Black is totally paralyzed. White went inside with

40.Kc7

And there is nothing that Black can do because his pieces are tied down to the defense of the d7-knight and he's hopeless. Black played

40...Bf5

because he has nothing to do anyway; and White simply grabbed the pawn with

41.Kxb7 Kf8 42.Bxd7

Here White simplified the position by taking the knight.

42...Bxd7 43.Kxa6 1–0

Then, he took the pawn on a6 because, after that, there is nothing Black can do against the very straightforward threat of Kb7, then the a-pawn goes all the way forward until it becomes a new queen. Therefore, Black resigned.

In this example, we have seen how White gradually followed “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” in an endgame. First of all, he brought his king into play and, after that, he improved the position of both of his bishops and that was enough to win the game.

The best thing you can do in chess is to attack. If you can attack, then do it! However, often times, there is no attacking move that you can play. In this case, you need to activate your position and, therefore, prepare your attack for the future. One of the most fundamental principles for activating your position is “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”.

It states: Find your least active piece and improve its position. This is one of the most common, most universal chess principles that you can follow throughout your entire game. If you follow it in an opening, it creates a plan of actions for you. 1) Develop minor pieces. 2) Castle. 3) Connect the rooks. The first two items, often times, can be realized together. Developing the heavy pieces is always the last in your to-do list.

There are also a few specific ideas that you can conclude out of “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”. In an opening, one of them says: Develop knights before bishops, because, often times, bishops are already active even on their original squares, while the knights need to be brought into play.

Therefore, develop knights before bishops. Another rule which is also a consequence of “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” states: Do not move the same piece twice in an opening. It's because you want to activate your least active piece and not to move again the piece which is already active.

If we come to an endgame, “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” suggests that you activate your king, you centralize it. As you may notice, there are a number of rules that you can conclude out of “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”.

There is no need for you to remember all those specifics. You just keep in mind the key takeaway, “The Principle of the Least Active Piece”: Find the least active piece and improve its position. If you follow this rule, it will help you play well in the vast majority of chess positions. Now you know it, congratulations! This one principle alone makes you a stronger chess player.

Conclusions

1. Principle of **the Least Active Piece**:
Find your least active piece, and improve its position.

2. Plan for an opening:

- Develop minor pieces.
- Castle.
- Connect the rooks.

3. Extra rules for an opening:

- Develop knights before bishops.
- Don’t move the same piece twice.

4. LAP in an endgame:
Bring your king into play (centralize it).

Lesson 3 - Maximize Your Power

Hi and welcome into the third key to victory. This one is called: "Maximize your power". Let's quickly recall what we were talking about in the previous lessons. First of all, we said you should attack your opponent.

Therefore, you focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board and you ask yourself: How can I go to that territory and make some damage, hopefully, to take or attack something. However, in most of the positions, there's no direct way to start the attack right away. What should you do then? In that case, you need to prepare your attack for the future; and, in order to do so, you need to activate your position.

In this case, the situation changes a little bit. Now, you should focus on your own army –your pieces; and you think how you can maximize their power, how you can activate them and how you can put them to the squares where they will be controlling the greatest quantity of squares on the chessboard.

In the previous lesson, we have discussed how to find which piece needs to be moved; it's the least active one. And, in this lesson, we'll go further and we'll talk about where your piece should go. So, once you've already decided what piece must make a move now, the next question you have is where to put it. That's exactly what we will find out during this lesson.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6

Diagram

White's turn

First, we'll analyze a very simple example just to illustrate the right principle; and then we'll see how it works in more complex practical situations. So, let's start a normal game in which you develop your pieces; and now, you know that it's time for you to develop your light-squared bishop.

The question is: where should it go? There are a number of squares where it can be possibly placed along this diagonal (f1–a6), it can even be fianchettoed, by playing g3; and then, it can be put on the g2-square. So, where should the bishop go?

Here comes "The Principle of Maximum Activity", which states: Move your piece as forward as possible –to the most forward available square. Now, why do I say available? It's because, for instance, the most forward square would be the a6-square.

But you can't really move your bishop there because it will be captured right away. Therefore, even though it is the most forward square, it is simply unavailable for you. The next available square would be the b5-square, that's where the bishop should go.

4.Bb5

Now, as you can see, when you follow the right principles, everything becomes super easy for you. This principle works in a couple of ways, but the two most common ways are: First of all, the situation that we're observing right now, where you already know which piece you may move, you're just wondering where it should go; and the second instance is when your piece is attacked. Let's say the bishop is now attacked by

4...Nd4

So, the knight is attacking the bishop and, once again, you need to figure out where to move it. Of course, in this particular case, you can also just take that knight, but maybe you just don't want that for some reason or, in some other positions, there will not be such an option and you'll still have to decide where to move your bishop.

The principle works in just exactly the same way. You move it to the most forward available square. So, if the bishop is attacked on b5, the most forward available square will be the c4- or a4-square. Those are the squares where you wish to move your bishop. You don't want to move it backward, to d3 or e2 or, of course, you don't want to put it back on its initial square. Therefore, any move like that –putting the bishop on c4 or a4– would be totally fine.

5.Bc4

Keres, Paul – Flohr, Salo [D74]
Semmering/Baden Semmering (8), 1937

Now, let's try to apply this principle on a practical example. This is a game between Keres and Flohr; both of them were very strong Grandmasters.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3 c6

Let me make a little remark here. We are talking about "The Principle of Maximum Activity", that says that you should be moving your pieces as forward as possible. That generally relates to your pawns just as well. So, if Black were going to move his c-pawn forward, why wouldn't he move it to c5? If you could move forward the 2 squares, that would increase your activity greater compared to the advancement of only one square.

Therefore, you can see again that when you know the right principle, things become really easy for you. Also, you can see that even Grandmasters make sometimes things that are not exactly correct.

5.Bg2 d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.0–0 0–0 8.Nc3 Nxc3 9.bxc3 c5

Here, I don't comment on this moves too much because there are different ways of developing pieces and the exact way, often times, is not very critical and; in this case, we're just focusing on other stuff, on our subject.

Let's have a look at this position. It's White to play. As you know, in the opening, we just need to bring our pieces into action, following “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” in most of the cases. Here, it is time for White to develop his dark-squared bishop. Where should the bishop go? What do you think? What kind of moves should you consider here? We know that you should normally go as forward as possible and the most forward available square here would be g5.

However, if White goes there, Bg5, it does not really work because Black can kick it away instantly with h6 and the bishop will have to retreat. Therefore, even though g5 is the most forward square for the bishop, it is actually unavailable. We may say that this would be a useless move; it will not really work. As for the other alternatives, there is the Bf4 move, which is definitely a great choice for White. In the actual game, he developed the bishop to another direction, he played

10.Ba3

In this case, it's not only a forward move but one that also attacks the c5-pawn. And we know that attack is usually a great thing and if you can attack, you should do it. [10.Bg5 h6]

10...cxd4

Black traded off the pawns; and here, there was another really instructive moment of this game. A lot of players in such position would simply recapture with the c-pawn and, even though it is a perfectly normal move, “The Principle of Maximum Activity” also has one more underlying idea, which states that **if you have a choice between moving your pawn or piece, you should move a piece**.

Why is that so? Because you know that, in general, you want to maximize the overall activity of your position; and the pieces are simply a lot stronger than the pawns and, therefore, you want to take care of them primarily. So, what if White captured on d4 with this little pawn from c3? Yes, that pawn would be more advanced, controlling these 2 additional squares (c5 and e5); and that would be a nice thing for White. However, let's just move forward and compare it with Nxd4.

11.Nxd4

In this case, you can see that this knight now controls a greater quantity of forward squares, and so, it becomes difficult for Black to develop his pieces normally. In addition to that, White just opened up his light-squared bishop, which is now pressuring Black's queenside.

Therefore, if you compare this situation with the one where White recaptured on d4 with a pawn, you can just see that capturing with the knight –moving your piece– increases your activity tremendously. That is why, if you have an about equal choice between moving a pawn or a piece, you should move the piece! [11.cxd4]

11...Qc7

Black is attacking White's c3-pawn with his queen; therefore White needs to do something about that.

12.Qb3

We also know from the previous lesson that when the opening ends, you need to connect your rooks. That's exactly what White is doing here. So, we are also quickly recollecting the previous lessons.

12...Bf6 13.Rfd1

White moved the rook to bring it into an open file.

13...Nd7

Let me ask you a question: What do you think about this move? Is it good, bad or normal? Often times, you see that in an opening stage, players make moves like those and you don't even think about them really. You think it's just a standard, common move to develop your knight somewhere.

However, when you have this good understanding of the general strategy of chess, you start seeing things deeper. You know that the knight should go as forward as possible and, therefore, it should normally go to c6 because that would be a more advanced square for Black than d7.

That is why, whenever you see that your opponent places the knight on the second rank, instead of the third rank (for Black it would be to place the knight to the seventh rank instead of the sixth), you already know that something is wrong with that guy. Either he does not know the right strategy, or maybe his position is so compromised already, that he just cannot play normal moves and he had to play some awkward maneuvers. [13...Nc6]

14.c4

White was probably expecting Black to play Nb6, and he is ready to kick it away by pushing his pawn forward, that's why he tried to advance it. Black played

14...Nc5

Where should White's queen go? It's a typical case of applying “The Principle of Maximum Activity”. Just once again, it's the situation when you need to decide: Where should your piece go? And we know that it should go forward. It could go to b5, that is the first choice, one of the best moves which just follow the principle. [14...Nb6 15.c5]

15.Qb4

In the actual game, he played Qb4 just because he wants to leave the b5-square for his knight. With Qb4, White is attacking the knight, so it has to go back.

15...Ne6

Now, White's d4-knight can go forward to b5, attacking Black's queen.

16.Nb5 Qe5

There is some sort of pressure along the long diagonal twice. We can just remove the a1-rook; and it's also “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” in action once again.

17.Rac1

You may be wondering: What would happen if Black captured White's e2-pawn? In that case, White could continue his attack by playing Nc3. That's an important moment to talk about as well because, not only we say that you should move your pieces forward; but, at the same time, it means that you should not be moving them backward. However, you know we shouldn't be too rigid, so you apply the principles in the normal situations, if there is no specific advantage that you can gain otherwise.

In this case, Nc3 not only attacks the queen, which is a big threat –and we know that, in general, attack is the best thing that you can do–; but also the knight is aiming at the d5-square in the next move where it will put severe pressure on Black's position, on his bishop, his pawn and a lot of squares.

Therefore, in this particular case, Nc3 is a powerful move, mainly because it is an attacking move. Even though, in general, if there were no Black's queen on e2, then moving your knight backward would be a bad maneuver. But in that case, it was well justified. If Black captures the knight with the bishop, you just recapture; and Black is in big trouble. His queen is somewhat still in danger: it can possibly be trapped soon (with Bf3), the e7-pawn is hanging and White can also move the bishop to b2, and maybe try to checkmate Black along the diagonal; and Black's position crumbles. In the real game, Black didn't go for that. At this point, he did not capture White's e2-pawn, instead he played

17...Rd8

There is a question for you: There is some tension between the rooks. Where should the white rook go, if you decide to move it somewhere? What should you do about it? What do you think? The first idea is that you should go in the forward direction. First of all, you can simply capture Black's d8-rook and that's a good option.

That would force Black's knight to go backward and we know that it's a bad thing. We want to go forward; we don't want to go back. That is one good idea. Another one is the move that he played in the game, which is the second available forward move for the rook. If you start looking backward, for some reason, you don't want to take on d8; then, you see that these two squares are unavailable (d8 and d7), the same with d6; but here comes the d5-square! That's where you can go. [17...Qxe2 18.Nc3 Bxc3 19.Qxc3]

18.Rd5

As you may notice, “The Principle of Maximum Activity” goes along the way of “The Principle of Attack” because, often times, if you go forward, that will also attack your opponent. Therefore, as you can see, all those principles just add up to each other.

18...Rxd5 19.cxd5

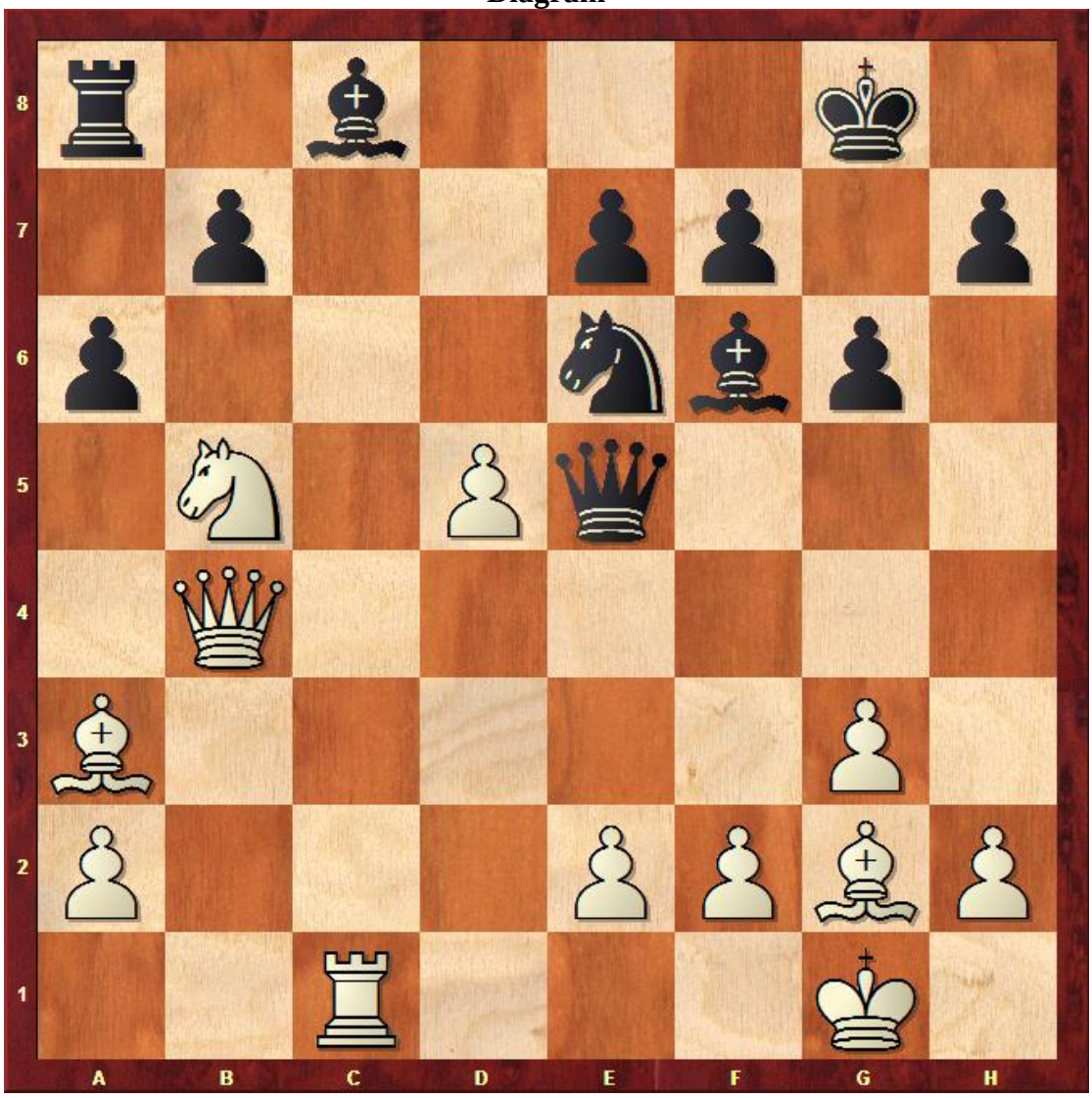
White recaptures with the pawn because it attacks the knight, so we know attack is the best thing to do; but Black found a great way to counterattack. He played

19...a6

counterattacking White's knight. Here is the next question for you: White's knight is attacked; let's say you want to move it somewhere. Where would you move the knight? Let's think about that for a second.

I'm pretty sure that a lot of players would just move it backward, for instance, playing Nc3 because it seems like the most natural reaction. Or, maybe, they would take the knight on e6. Anyway, if we considered the moves of the knight, most players would not look in the forward direction, which is what you should do actually. That is what White did in the game.

Diagram



White's turn

20.Na7

From here, the knight attacks Black's c8-bishop, and Black is really in trouble because, currently, Black's both minor pieces are under attack; he cannot protect both of them. In case Black captures that a7-knight, White will simply recapture Black's c8-bishop and he will check Black's king; Black will have to do something about that. In addition to that, the e6-knight is still under attack; so, the only way to save both the king and the knight will be to retreat with the knight: going backward with Nf8.

And, here is my final question for you. How would you play here as White? In order to find the right move, you can actually apply both "The Principle of Attack" and "The Principle of Maximum Activity". **You need to focus on the opponent's half of the board and ask yourself: How can I go there and attack something?**

If you think that way, you will notice that there are not many options available. Maybe, you can push the pawn to d6, which is a good option or you can move the queen somewhere forward, attacking Black's rook (Qb6 or Qc5). The most forward

move for your queen would be Qb6; and it's actually the easiest way to win the game because the rook on a7 is currently trapped. In the next move, you will just capture it for nothing and that is why White is winning.

In this game, that we have just observed, you can see that almost throughout the whole game, White managed to find great moves simply by following “The Principle of Maximum Activity”.

20...Nd4 [20...Rxa7 21.Rxc8+ Nf8 22.d6 *(22.Qb6)*]
21.Rxc8+ Rxc8 22.Nxc8 Qxe2 23.h4 Nf5 24.Qe4 1–0

Kramnik,Vladimir (2800) - Aronian,Levon (2794) [C50]
FIDE Candidates, 22.03.2018

Here is the next example. It's a very interesting position from the game between Kramnik and Aronian in the Candidates Tournament.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.d3 a6 6.Nd5 Nxd5 7.Bxd5 d6 8.Be3 Bxe3 9.fxe3 0–0 10.0–0 Nb8 11.b4 Nd7 12.Qd2 c6 13.Bb3 a5 14.a3 Nf6 15.h3 h6 16.Rab1 b5 17.Qc3 Bd7 18.Rf2 Qb6 19.Re1 Rfe8 20.Nh4 c5 21.Ref1 cxb4 22.Qe1 d5 23.axb4 dxe4 24.bxa5 Rxa5 25.Ng6 Be6 26.Nxe5 exd3 27.Rxf6 gxf6 28.Rxf6 d2 29.Qg3+ Kf8 30.Rf1 Ra7 31.Ng6+ Kg7 32.Nf4+ Kh8 33.Nh5 f6 34.Nxf6 Rf8 35.Qf4 Rh7 36.Qe5 Qc7

Diagram

White's turn

It's White to play now and, as you can see, the position is really crazy –a lot of the pieces are attacking each other. Everything seems too much complicated. Nevertheless, let's try to figure out what White should be doing. In fact, White won here in one move. After the move that Kramnik played here, Aronian resigned right away.

So, you can think about it for a second. Here are a few tips because, of course, the position is very crazy and complicated and, I guess, Kramnik thought about this move for a long time. The first thing is what we discussed about attacking. In a tactical position, it's so important to pay attention to forcing moves, which are checks, captures and attacking moves.

But the most forcing one is check. So, if you can make check, you should look for checks first of all. And the next idea is, as you can see, the only way to give check is by moving your knight away from the way of your queen; and by doing so, you can possibly deliver check to your opponent's king. So, the next question would be: where should White's knight go? And, thinking about that, you really may apply "The

Principle of Maximum Activity". If you follow that, even in this crazily complicated position, then you can find out the right tactical shot: the sudden

37.Ne8+

At first sight, it seems like White just blundered the queen because Black can simply grab it with his queen. But that is not the end of the line because White will recapture the rook on f8; and, all of a sudden, you can see that it's literally a checkmate. Black can make the last move to cover the king, but White can still recapture it; and it's a checkmate. It's a quite interesting example, something like a tactical drill from the game of two of the best players in the world. You can see that, even in a highly tactical position, by following the right principles, you can simplify the task of finding the right moves.

37...Qxe5 38.Rxf8+ Bg8 39.Rxg8# 1–0

When you need to decide where to move your piece, apply "The Principle of Maximum Activity". It states: Move your piece to the most forward available square. It also means that you should move your pieces forward and you should not move them backward.

Here, of course, there's one note to be made: We are talking about the situations often equally good –normal choice in standard situations. For instance, if you can capture something in the opponent's position (you can grab material); then, definitely, you can do that even if that is a backward move.

Or, in the opposite terms, if the opponent is threatening your piece and there's no other way to save it, other than moving it backward (retreat it), then you should do that. So, I would say that if you follow "The Principle of Maximum Activity", whether if it's not dangerous for your pieces or pawns, in the vast majority of situations, you should be moving your pieces forward.

One more logical consequence of the same rule states: If there's an equal choice between moving either a piece or a pawn, move your piece. Why is that so? Because that would maximize the activity of your position, which is one of the most fundamental principles of the chess game.

So, the main key takeaway from this lesson is still very straightforward: Move your pieces to the most forward available squares. If you do so, you'll maximize the power of your position and will demolish your opponent with your future attack.

Conclusions

Principle of Maximum Activity:
Move your piece to the most forward available square.

Go forward!
Don’t go back.

If you can move either a pawn or a piece – move a piece.

Lesson 4 - Becoming a Chess Terminator

Welcome to the lesson #4, called "Becoming a Chess Terminator". In this lesson, you are going to learn how you can become a terminator in chess. Indeed, in chess games, sometimes, it's crucial for your success to terminate your opponent.

And, of course, I don't recommend that you do it in such a brutal way like Schwarzenegger did in his Terminator movies. But still, at times when you're playing a game of chess, a certain opponent's piece becomes really annoying for you, and then, it's time to terminate it! How can you do that? Let's have a look. You might have noticed so far that in a chess game it's really advisable to go forward. And we are going to discuss that you should be going forward with your pawns as much as you can.

1.e4 e5

And then, when it comes to your pieces, you also want to develop your knights to the most forward available squares, which are the third rank for one knight; and for the other one, for instance, you can go to c3.

2.Nc3 Nc6

And then when it comes to the bishop, you also want to move it forward to b5.

3.Bb5

At the same time, we've discussed about the subject of the attack. We said that you should focus your attention on the opponent's territory, try to move your forces there and make some damage. For instance, when you play your bishop to b5, it not only activates your bishop itself, but it also starts putting pressure on the opponent's position, which makes it unpleasant for Black.

At the same time, you shouldn't forget about the opposite side of the coin. If we say that we'll be trying to penetrate in the opponent's territory and harass him in that way, the opponent might want to do the same. For instance, in this case, he may jump with his knight forward to d4 onto your territory.

3...Nd4

And then, this rule will start working in reverse. It means that, **whenever you see an opponent's piece coming to your half of the board, you should neutralize it**. It is very important to be aware of this rule. I call it "**The Principle of Neutralization**".

In the game of chess, there are so many rules. You know that you need to develop your pieces, calculate variations, fight for the center, occupy weak squares, etc, etc. Therefore, it's always important to note what the most crucial thing in a certain given position is. In that way, you're never in doubt, you know that you should be addressing the most crucial element in the position.

And the principles of "The 7 Keys to Victory" that you're learning in this course state exactly that. They advice you what the most critical element in the position is that you should be addressing. So, in this position, for instance, the most critical element is Black's knight on d4. Therefore, you know that your next move should address this issue. One of the good ways to neutralize that knight would be to play

4.Nf3

which combines your own development with an attack on that knight; and therefore, it will eliminate it in one of the following moves. This also means that it will be wrong for White to do anything else. You cannot say: "All right, I'll take care of that knight later. For now, instead of playing Nf3, I will develop my dark-squared bishop somewhere to finalize my development." No, that's the wrong way.

"**The Principle of Neutralization**" says: If there's an opponent's piece coming to your half of the board, you should address it immediately. You want to push it away or exchange it, but get rid of it somehow right now. This is the general principle. And now, let's see how it works in practical examples.[4.d3]

Kasparov, Garry (2812) – Karpov, Anatoly (2710) [E32]
Siemens Giants Frankfurt (10), 02.07.1999

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 0–0 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3 b6 7.Bg5 Bb7 8.e3 d6 9.f3 h6 10.Bh4 Nbd7 11.Nh3 c5 12.Be2 d5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.0–0 a5 15.Rad1 Qb6 16.Rd2 Bc6 17.Bf2 Ba4 18.Nf4 Bb3 19.cxd5 Nxd5 20.Nxd5 exd5

Diagram

White's turn

This is a position from a game between Kasparov and Karpov, the two heavy weights of the chess world –Kasparov being one of the greatest players of all times.

It's White to play. Think for yourself: How would you play here as White? Of course, there are many things that White could do here, but you know that there's a little tip that we're going to apply: the principle that we are learning. And therefore, we are going to apply "The Principle of Neutralization".

That being said, you may notice here that there is a black bishop on your half of the board (Bb3). And therefore, your primary task is to get rid of that bishop somehow. So, the real question you should be asking yourself here is: How can I push that bishop away from my territory?

And the answer becomes very obvious because there are not many ways how you can possibly do this. The only real way to do that is just by moving your bishop to d1 and offering an exchange.

Actually, there are only two ways to neutralize an opponent's piece from your half of the board, and one of these is to offer an exchange –to trade out that piece; and that's exactly what White is doing.

Before we go to the following moves, let me just make a little remark about the position. At first sight, you may be wondering: What's really the problem with that bishop standing on b3? It's not attacking anything. So, why should I take care of it?

Even though it is partially true that this bishop is not attacking anything at the moment, it's still blocking your position. As you may notice, it attacks a number of squares within your territory and, therefore, your pieces are feeling somewhat awkward, somewhat embarrassed, they can't move freely on your own territory of the board, which is something strange. At the same time, that bishop is also blockading your queenside pawns, so they cannot move forward.

Therefore, you can see that, all in all, that bishop just blockades the normal communications within your position; and even though it doesn't attack anything directly, it's still a very annoying thing, and that is why it's really time to terminate that bishop! And that is why White plays

21.Bd1!

If you were able to guess that move, congratulations! This is exactly what Garry Kasparov played. Now you can see that, by following the right principles, you can even play as strong as the best players of all times. Let's go ahead. Black played Bc4 – he didn't want to trade off the bishops. But before that, let's quickly see what would happen if Black captured the bishop. That would already let White bring his f1-rook into play.

Now, we can already see how better the white position became just within one move. White's pieces are well coordinated, they are putting strong pressure along the d-file; and now, actually, Black is in trouble. How can Black protect that pawn? He can protect it with the knight, but then you can keep attacking. You can now attack Black's knight on f6 and, after you eliminate that defender of the d5-pawn, that pawn will fall and Black's position will crumble. In the actual game, Karpov refused to trade off the bishops. He played

21...Bc4

He wanted to save that good bishop for him and White just retreated with the rook. He played [21...Bxd1 22.Rfxd1 Nf6 23.Bh4]

22.Re1

If White just moved the bishop backward to e2, Black could repeat the position, so it didn't give anything to White; therefore, he had to do something different. That is why, after Black played Bc4, White just removed the rook from the attack. Black replied [22.Be2 Bb3]

22...Qe6

Here comes the next question for you: How would you play here as White? In general, the situation remains to be the same: There's still a black bishop on your half of the board; and you still want to terminate it! We already know that one way to terminate an opponent's piece is to trade it off, to exchange it. And, there's also a second way: you can push it away, you can attack it. That is what White did. He played b3, attacking the bishop; and that is the most straightforward way to kick it away. Black played back.

23.b3 Ba6

I'm not really sure why Black decided to give up the pawn. We know from "The Principle of the Material" which says that if you can take something, just do it! So, here White can actually grab the pawn, and that's exactly what he did.

24.Qxa5 Bb7

Where should the queen go? It's a quick question for you. What do you think? I hope that, after studying enough the previous lessons, now you know that, first of all, you should look in the forward direction; so then, you come to the move

25.Qc7

Once again, you see that it's just "The Principle of Maximum Activity" and, if you know it, you can play as strong as Garry Kasparov. Now Black's bishop is being attacked, so, he plays

25...Bc6

At the moment, White's pawn on a3 is hanging, and, as we know, you want to grab the opponent's material and you want to save your own. Therefore, White played

26.a4

to protect that pawn. Now, let's just evaluate what happened in this position within a couple of last moves. First of all, Black's bishop was standing in the rear of White's position, on b3, hampering White in his plans. Now it was kicked away back to c6, where it had no place to go.

As you can see, there were no available squares for that bishop at the moment. Along the way, White won a pawn and he's got this great advantage now, because of the extra pawn and a better position. Kasparov won the game later on.

26...Rfc8 27.Qg3 c4 28.e4 dxe4 29.fxe4 Ne5 30.Bd4 Re8 31.Rc2 Ng6 32.Rxc4 Bd5 33.Bg4 Qe7 34.Rc7 Qb4 35.Qc3 Rab8 36.Qxb4 Rxb4 37.Bc3 Rbxe4 38.Rxe4 Bxe4 39.Rc8 Rxc8 40.Bxc8 Bc2 41.a5 Bxb3 42.a6 Nf4 43.Bb7 1–0

Londyn,Radek (2066) - Fiala,Robert (2278) [A03]
CZE-chTJ 0102 Czechia (1), 2002

Now, let's go ahead to the next example. This time I have chosen a game between two club level players, so that you just can see the typical mistakes that club players make. And also, you can see how players follow the right principles at amateur levels; at a level where you can easily relate to your own games because your opponents might do similar things: correct things and mistakes in their games.

1.b3 d5 2.Bb2 Nf6 3.e3 Bf5 4.f4 e6 5.Nf3 Be7 6.Be2 Nbd7 7.0–0 c6 8.c4 h6 9.Nc3 a6 10.h3 Bd6 11.Rc1 Qe7 12.d4 g5 13.Ne5 gxf4 14.exf4 Ne4

Diagram

White's turn

It's White to play now. First of all, let me ask you this question: What do you think White should be doing here? You know that your focus should be on the opponent's intruder on your half of the board, that e4-knight. You want to get rid of it somehow; the easiest way to do that is just to take it straightaway. There could be some other ways to do that –to fight against that knight.

Maybe, you can capture the d5-pawn, trying to somehow undermine the e4-knight; or, maybe, you can attack it with your bishop additionally (Bd3). But, anyway, your thoughts should be about that knight and how to get rid of it. Again, the most straightforward way is just to exchange it right away. We know that there are only 2 ways mainly to get rid of an opponent's piece from your half of the board: it's either to exchange it or to attack it.

15.Nxe4 Bxe4

What should White do next? The situation does not change so much because there is still an opponent's bishop on your half of the board and, therefore, you want to eliminate it somehow. The most straightforward way to do that would be to place your bishop somewhere, on f3 or d3, and try to fight against that bishop and exchange it somehow. That is what White should have done. In the actual game however, White decided to play

16.Nxd7

Now, let me ask you: What do you think about this move? Is it good, bad or normal? We know that it is really good to have your piece standing on the opponent's half of the board and, therefore, it is really awesome for White to have that powerful knight on e5.

Definitely, you don't want to give it away! You don't want to trade it off, you want to keep it. It is actually Black's task to fight against that knight. You can see that White's player is being rated 2066, a relatively strong player among the club level players. But he makes that really obvious mistake that you can notice if you just know the right principles. So, Nxd7 is a very bad mistake for White, which makes his position worse straightaway. [16.Bd3]

16...Kxd7 17.Bd3

Now Black has a better way to support his bishop. He played a very clever move

17...f5

What is the purpose of this move? We'll have a look. White wants to trade off the bishop; and he actually did it.

18.c5

I don't know why he did this.

18...Bc7 19.Bxe4

Then, he traded off the bishop. Now you can see the transformation. In the past, Black had that powerful bishop on e4, which was attacking lots of squares in White's territory –that was annoying.

19...fxe4

After the exchange, after the bishop was traded off, Black replaced that bishop with a pawn. Even though the pawn is not as strong as the piece, it still controls a number of squares in White's position and it also hampers White from normal maneuvering in his territory. Somewhere, in the future, maybe in the endgame, this pawn can also, possibly, go forward and get promoted to a new queen.

Therefore, White will always have to keep an eye on that pawn and try to blockade it. As you can see, even an opponent's pawn on your half of the board is already somewhat annoying for you. Of course, it is less annoying than a piece, but it's still something advantageous for Black. That is why it's great for Black to have the pawn there.

20.Qh5 Raf8

Here, you can see that Black simply has a great position. He can attack the f4-pawn, which he is doing right now.

21.f5 Rhg8

All in all, it's a great position for Black. Here White blundered, but even without that blunder, White's position would be pretty bad anyway. He played

22.f6

giving up the pawn.

22...Rxf6 23.Rxf6 Qxf6

White was probably hoping for the move

24.Rf1

with some counterattack. But Black found a strong reply that made White resign.

24...Bh2+

deflecting the king from the protection of the rook.

25.Kxh2 Qxf1 0–1

winning the material, threatening checkmate, so White just resigned. The most critical moment of this game was at the beginning, when we had just noticed how badly White handled the situation with his centralized knight. Once again, congratulations for the fact that now you understand chess much better than a lot of club level players.

Gershon, Alik (2558) – Karjakin, Sergey (2460) [D97]
Moscow Aeroflot op Moscow (3), 06.02.2002

This time, it's a game between Gershon and Karjakin. Karjakin is one of the leading players in the world, who played the World Championship Match against Carlsen last year.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qb3 dxc4 6.Qxc4 0–0 7.e4 a6 8.e5 Nfd7 9.Qb3 Nb6 10.Be3 Be6 11.Qc2 Nc6 12.a3 Nd5 13.Nxd5 Bxd5 14.Rd1 Bxf3 15.gxf3 e6 16.h4 h5 17.Qe4 Ne7 18.Bg5 Qd7 19.Bh3 c6 20.0–0

Currently, it is Black to play. You may think about that for some seconds –think what Black should play here. Of course, the general principles work at any position. They work in this position just as well.

By following the general principles, you can see that there is a white bishop on your half of the board, which is putting some pressure into Black's position. Ideally speaking, Black would love to put his rook somewhere on d8, by playing something like Rad8.

Because there's also a white weak pawn on d4, Black would love to play Rad8, and maybe double rooks along the d-file to attack it. But, due to White's powerful g5-bishop, that would always be somewhat uncomfortable for Black because it attacks the knight, the rook and Black can't really move his pieces freely. That is why, before starting to perform his plan, Black needs to get rid of the g5-bishop somehow.

Diagram

Black's turn

What is the way to do that? There are not many options really. If you try to kick it away with f6, it just does not really work; it weakens your position too much. After the exchange, you can see that White is now threatening to take your e6-pawn with the bishop and double attack on Black's king and queen.

So, this is something really bad for Black –it does not work tactically. What is the other way to eliminate the bishop? We know that there are only 2 ways: one way is to attack it; the other way is to exchange it. How can you exchange it? Black played

20...Kh7 [20...Rad8; 20...f6 21.exf6] **21.Rd3 Bh6**

He did this to trade off that bishop. The position is so closed that it is not very dangerous for Black if his king appears for just a second on h6; Black can easily retreat back in the future. Anyway, the position is so closed that White cannot attack Black's king anyway.

22.f4 Bxg5

Black successfully traded off the bishop.

23.fxg5

Now, as there was no danger for Black anymore, he started performing his plan, by playing

23...Rad8

putting pressure along the d-file.

24.Rfd1

Now Black is just free to perform his plan. He played

24...Qc7

preparing the doubling of rooks along the d-file, again, just putting pressure on that weak d4-pawn.

25.Rf3

Here, there is another instructive moment. If Black tried to perform his plan mechanically and just doubled rooks along the d-file, playing something like Rd7, could you notice what White would play here in that case? There is a tactical combination here. White could just grab the e6-pawn with Bxe6, using the fact that the pawn is pinned, which would be really bad for Black. And looking at this position, you can notice an interesting thing.

Earlier, we used to talk about the situation when there is an opponent's piece standing on your half of the board; and we said that this is unpleasant for you. However, at times, there are situations when an opponent's piece is not standing on your half of the board, but is looking at your half of the board, just like the f3-rook and the h3-bishop.

In those cases, it is not as dangerous as compared to the situation when there is an opponent's intruder on your half of the board. But still, ideally speaking, you wish to neutralize that pressure somehow: to push those pieces away or to lock them, but to do something, so that they don't attack you anymore. Black did it by playing

25...Nf5

just to shut down the position totally. [25...Rd7 26.Bxe6]

26.Bxf5 gxf5

White trades it off, but after that, the position remains to be locked; and now White has no active pieces anymore.

27.Qc2 Rd5 28.b4 Rfd8

Black can freely double rooks along the d-file.

29.Rfd3 Kg6

He played this to lock the position on the kingside entirely.

30.Qc4 Qb6

putting this severe pressure on White's weak d4-pawn; so White was in big trouble. In the future, Black also played a5 to create another weakness on b4 in White's position; and he continued the attack and won the game later on.

The key point here is that, after Black neutralized White's active pieces, White remained with only his passive pieces, which are now only the defenders of his weak pawns. And that's it! This is the power of neutralization. When you terminate the opponent's active pieces, the opponent cannot attack anymore and he will be doomed to stay with passive pieces.

31.f4 a5 32.Kf2 axb4 33.axb4 Ra8 34.Kf3 Ra4 35.Rb1 Qa7 36.Qc3 Ra2 37.b5 Rh2 38.Ra1 Rh3+ 39.Ke2 Rxd3 40.Kxd3 Qb6 41.bxc6 bxc6 42.Ke3 c5 43.Rd1 Qb5 44.Qc2 [44.Rd3 Qb1! *(44...c4!? 45.Rd1 Qc6µ)* 45.dxc5 Qg1+ 46.Ke2 Rxc5–+; 44.Kf2 cxd4 45.Rxd4 Qb6 46.Ke3 Rc5 47.Qd2 Rc4 48.Qd3 Rb4,]

44...Qb4 45.Kf3 cxd4 46.Rb1 Qa3+ 47.Rb3 Qa8 48.Kg3 Rd8 0–1

In this lesson, we were talking about the fourth Key to Victory: “The Principle of Neutralization”. It states: If there is an opponent's piece on your half of the board, you should neutralize it. There are only 2 ways to neutralize an opponent's intruder: you can either exchange it or attack it, and push it away.

We are mainly talking about an opponent's piece here because it has the greatest power. If there is an opponent's pawn on your half of the board, ideally speaking; you would also love to get rid of it, but it is less critical. However, if there is an opponent's piece coming to your territory, you should always take care of it right away and terminate it!

Conclusions

Principle of neutralization:
If there’s an opponent’s piece on your half of the board – neutralize it.

2 ways to neutralize an opponent’s piece:

- Exchange it
- Attack it (push it away)

Lesson 5 - Limitation is Domination

Hi again. Welcome into the lesson #5 called "Limitation is domination". Let's just quickly recollect what we've been talking about earlier. We discuss that, in general, the idea of a chess game is to checkmate the opponent's king and, therefore, you need to attack, you need to go forward and attack the opponent's king and all his army –the pawns and the pieces.

The next question is: Who is going to be the attacker? Who is going to be the defender? And that depends on the activity of your forces. You wish to have your forces controlling the greatest quantity of the squares on the chessboard; and, therefore, to be the most active.

And the flip side of the same coin is that you wish the opponent's pieces to be the least active and controlling the smallest amount of squares on the chessboard. So, here come those principles of activity that we've been talking about in the previous lessons. And this time, we'll just talk about the flip side of the same coin.

In the previous lessons, we said that you need to activate your pieces; and also in the last lesson, we used to say that you need to kick back the opponent's forces that come to your half of the board. But now, we'll also pay attention to the opponent's army and how you can restrain its activity.

Originally, at the beginning of a chess game, both opponents have equal control on each side. Both of them control the first three ranks of their territory. Their pieces are situated on the first two ranks and they're attacking the squares on the third rank. So, in the initial position, the situation is equal for both opponents.

However, it changes after every move; and you want to expand and control the major part of the chessboard, while leaving the minor part of it for your opponent. So, let's see how that changes. Let's say, White makes the first move

1.d4

And that already changes the situation quite significantly. So, now White has one more pawn in the center; it controls two more squares forward; and also, it enables the white queen and the bishop to be controlling a couple of new squares. And, of course, White still controls the first three ranks just like it was before his first move. As you can see, the quantity of squares under your control changes all the time.

And, again you want to maximize this quantity and minimize the territory of your opponent. All right, how do you get the advantage in activity by limiting the opponent's activity? There are only two ways how you can limit the opponent's activity and, therefore, get your dominance. Let's have a look: The first way is when you get space advantage.

1...Nf6 2.d5

And now, you can already notice a couple of interesting things. Thanks to White's pawn standing on d5, and gaining that space for White, there are a number of good

things that happens after that. For instance, White's queen has now three squares where it can go forward, while for Black's queen, even if Black eventually moved the d7-pawn forward, there would still be only one square available. So, now it's somewhat blocked. You can also note that Black's knight on b8 is now somewhat passive; it cannot normally go forward because the c6-square was taken away by the white d5-pawn.

The same thing happens with the black d7-pawn –it can go only one square forward–, while the white pawn already went to three squares forward. So, you can see that, thanks to White's pawn on d5, it enables greater activity of a number of White's pieces; and, at the same time, it limits the activity of a number of Black's forces. You can get space advantage and limit the activity of your opponent by advancing your pawns, and especially your central pawns. Why is it so? Well, it's just because the pawns are more static and; if you put the pawn in a certain place, often times, it will be standing there for a long period of time.

On the contrary, if Black tries to advance his knight forward

2...Ne4

White can easily kick it back by one of his pieces, or just by playing [2...c6; 2...h5]

3.f3

so, the knight would have to retreat. Therefore, the pieces are not so suitable for gaining territory, while the pawns are like a fence around your army, and, while building up that fence, that barrier; you ensure the greatest quantity of squares under your control. And, later on, you can unfold your army behind that shield.

One note to be made here is that, of course, your pawns need to be well protected. Like in the current position, White's last move, d5, is actually a mistake because, even though it gains some space for White, the pawn is not supported by the pieces; and so, Black can easily attack it. For instance, by playing c6, and White will have pretty soon to trade off the pawn; and therefore, White's idea of gaining space will fail.

Anyway, for now, we're not talking about any particular game; we are discussing ideas in general. In a while, we'll see how that works in practical examples. The first way to limit the activity of your opponent is to get space advantage by moving your pawns, especially the central pawns forward. Why do we talk about the central pawns and not just any pawn?

It's because, if Black moved a flank pawn forward (h5), that would activate potentially only one piece, the h8-rook, which could possibly go forward after that. But, right now, we cannot go to the h6-square anyway because it is under the fire of White's pieces. Therefore, you can see that it would only help a white piece, while only to some little extent a black one because it cannot be used anyway. If you compare that with White's pawn on d5, you can see that, by advancing that pawn, White actually gets more space for a number of pieces standing behind that pawn. Therefore, advancing the central pawns is much more advantageous.

That is why we can conclude that the way to get space advantage is mainly by advancing your central pawns and making sure they are well supported by your pieces, so that the opponent cannot attack them too easily.

The second best way to limit the activity of the opponent's position is to act against a certain particular piece.

1.e4 Nf6

Currently, this knight is very active, standing on the center, attacking White's pawn; it's very good. So, White may wish to kick that knight away. The pieces are most active in the center, but if you can kick them away –kick them backward or kick them to the side–, they will become less powerful.

2.e5 Nd5 3.c4 Nb6

That happens in Alekhine's Defense, where White just kicks that knight away from the center and it ends up being on b6. As you may notice, now the knight has simply no squares forward to go to. This is a very good criterion for the limitation of the opponent's forces. If they cannot go anywhere, they become somewhat useless for the opponent.

So, that is the second way of limiting the activity of the opponent's forces. It is when you act against a certain particular piece and push it to the edge of the chessboard, push it backward, push it to the side, restrict its activity and make it immobile. That is one of the key ideas: you wish to make the opponent's pieces immobile, so that they simply cannot move. That is the ideal.

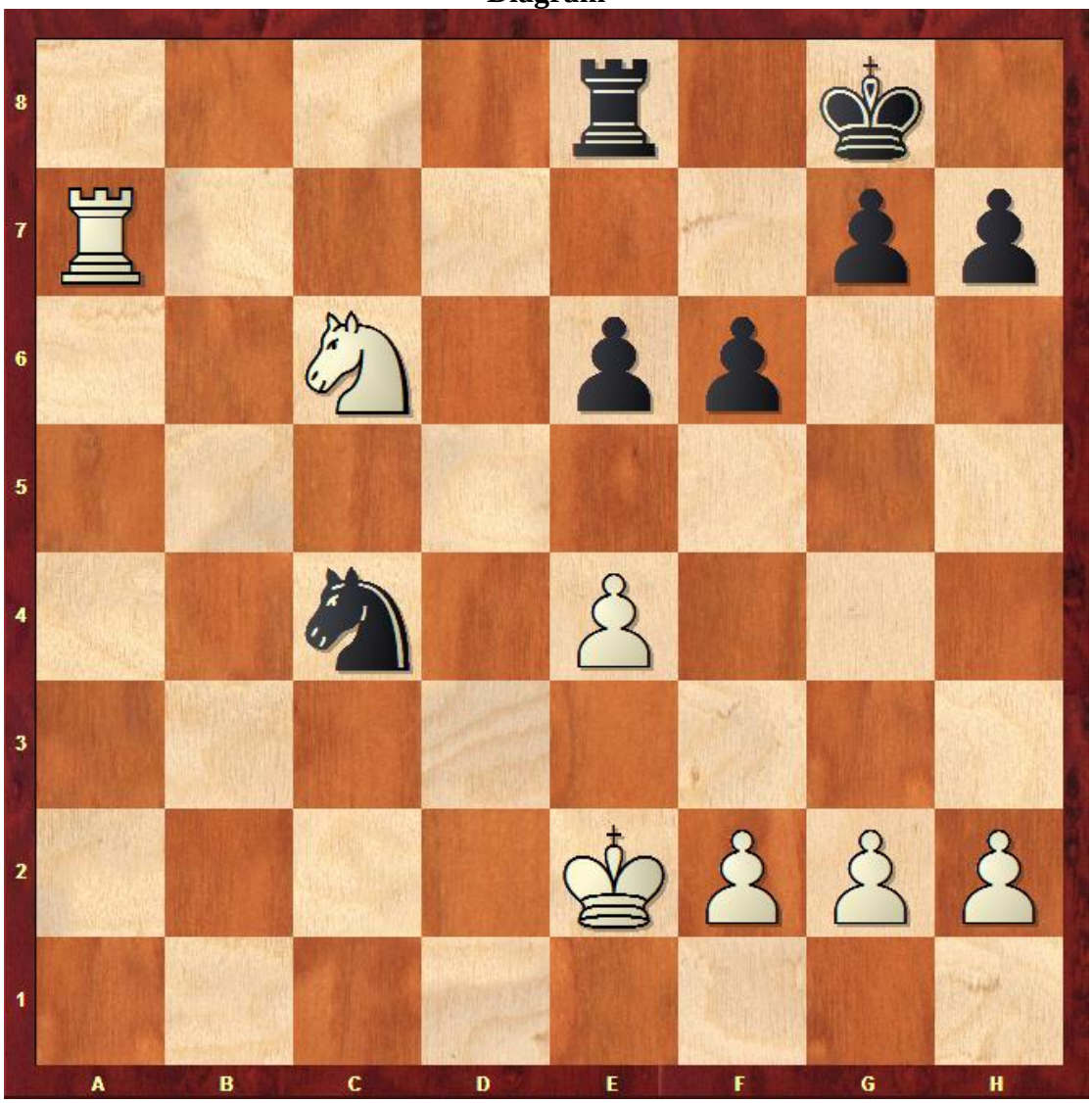
Now let's see how those two general ideas of limitation –the first one is getting more space and the second one is restricting a particular piece– work in practical examples.

Karjakin, Sergey (2763) – So, Wesley (2799) [E51]
FIDE Candidates 2018 Berlin GER (7.1), 18.03.2018

This is a position from a game between Karjakin and Wesley So, from the Candidates Tournament of 2018.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0–0 5.Nf3 d5 6.Bd2 c5 7.a3 cxd4 8.axb4 dxc3 9.Bxc3 dxc4 10.Bxc4 Qxd1+ 11.Kxd1 Bd7 12.Ke2 Rc8 13.Bd3 Nd5 14.Ne5 Be8 15.Bd2 f6 16.Nc4 Rd8 17.Rhc1 Nc6 18.Be4 Ndxb4 19.Bxb4 Nxb4 20.Bxb7 Rab8 21.Rxa7 Rd7 22.Na5 Nd3 23.Rd1 Nxb2 24.Rxd7 Bxd7 25.Bc6 Bxc6 26.Nxc6 Re8 27.e4 Nc4

Diagram



White's turn

It is White to play now. At first sight, it may seem like the position is very drawish – the material is equal and most of the pieces were already traded. However, Karjakin decided to start to play against Black's c4-knight and to restrict its activity. First of all, he played

28.Kd3

to keep this knight away.

28...Nd6

The knight went backward, which is always a good thing for you. Then

29.f4

preparing a further advancement to the center, by pushing his pawn forward to e5. By doing so, he is actually following both ideas of limiting the opponent's activity

because, first of all, we know that, in order to limit the opponent's activity, you need to get space advantage by pushing forward your central pawns; and that is exactly what White is going to do. The second thing is that we can act against a certain particular piece, in this example, against Black's knight; and we want to push it to the edge. Let's see how it went.

29...Kf8 30.e5

White actually pushed firstly the pawn to e5.

30...fxe5 31.fxe5 Nf5

After the exchange, Black's knight was kicked out of the center. Then, White continued by playing

32.g4

to keep pushing it backward or somewhere on the edge, which actually happened.

32...Nh4

Now we can see that it is already quite an achievement for White. This knight is now standing on the edge, doing nothing and having no real prospects. Here, White decided to somewhat expand his plan. He noticed one more thing: Apart from the knight, there is also Black's rook which does not have many squares to go to. It actually has only one potential square to play, Rc8, trying to get away along the c-file. White just prevented that by playing

33.Kc4

So, now White wants to lock Black's rook on the last rank, to lock it on the edge because now, White will always be able to support his knight with his king and, therefore, the rook will always be locked there on the edge. Black played

33...Nf3

attacking White's h2-pawn. White played

34.Ra2

to protect it. I'm not really sure why he played that. White could have just played h3; that would have been a good alternative. Maybe, he also wants to win the f3-knight, using the pin. Black played [34.h3]

34...Rc8

trying to get his rook out. White continued with

35.Kb5

supporting the knight. And here, Black is actually quite powerless. Let's just see what happens next.

35...Ke8 36.Kb6

Now the c8-rook is not only restricted; all of a sudden, it becomes an objective of attack. White is really threatening to play Kb7 and, eventually, simply to capture that rook because it has no squares to retreat. And something similar may happen with Black's f3-knight, even though maybe White will not actually capture it, but it just has nothing to do. Black simply played

36...g5

because he was not sure what to do; and White replied with

37.h3

just showing how helpless Black is, that Black simply has no moves; he has nothing to do! Black, just desperately, put his knight on e5, sacrificed it and resigned in the next move.

37...Nxe5 38.Nxe5

Anyway, you may notice how powerless Black's position is; and it happened due to White's smart strategy of limiting the activity of Black's forces. Firstly, he limited the activity of Black's knight and, later on, the activity of Black's rook. And now White just has a total domination. He can do whatever he wants. Even if Black didn't sacrifice the knight as he did in the game –instead played something else–, White still could do anything: play Ra7, just for example.

He can later on switch this rook to h7, attacking Black's pawn, and then, maybe, even try to get to the king or the rook. White can just decide to attack Black's rook with his king. He can just do whatever he wants while Black is absolutely powerless; and that is how limitation gives you the domination.

38...Rc3 39.Rh2 Ke7 40.Kb5 Re3 1–0

Kasparov, Garry (2750) – Van der Wiel, John (2555) [E12]
Optiebeurs Amsterdam (1), 1988

This is a game between Kasparov playing White and Van der Wiel.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.a3 Ba6 5.Qc2 Bb7 6.Nc3 c5 7.e4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Nb3 Nc6 10.Bg5 a6 11.0–0–0 Qc7 12.Kb1 0–0–0 13.Qd2 d6 14.f3 h6 15.Bf4 Ne5

It is White to play. If you think about this position for a moment, at first sight, it looks like White just needs to finalize his development by playing Be2. This is a perfectly

fine move to play; White could definitely do this. However, we know that there are 2 ideas that we need to keep in mind.

The first thing is that you want to increase the activity of your pieces, but there is also the flip side of the same coin: you wish to restrict the activity of your opponent. If White played Be2, Kasparov would realize that there is a way for Black to expand and activate his position. Black could go forward by playing g5, kicking White's f4-bishop backward. Either it has to go to e3, allowing Black to trade off his bishop, which is currently under the attack of the knight; or if the white bishop goes to g3, Black can keep chasing it by playing Nh5.

Now, the knight is attacking the bishop and, if it goes backward, the knight can also go to f4. So, this somewhat allows Black to activate his position. Kasparov just decided to prevent it. In this position, instead of playing Be2, he played the smart move, pawn to h4, preventing Black from advancing his pawn to g5. That is the way for White to gain that sort of space advantage, not letting Black advance his pawn forward.

While talking about limiting the opponent's activity, we are mainly talking about his pieces, but just as you have noticed, advancing his pawns, often times, helps the opponent activate his pieces. Therefore, we want to blockade the opponent's pawns, not only for the sake of it, but also because it will help us keep his pieces out of the game.

16.h4 [16.Be2 g5 17.Be3 *(17.Bg3 Nh5 18.Be1 Nf4)*] **16...Kb8**

White just continued by pushing one step forward to

17.h5

where it does not only blockade the g7-pawn, so it cannot really go forward, but it also takes away the g6-square, where Black's e5-knight could eventually go, but not anymore.

17...Rd7

By the way, you may be wondering that, in the previous examples, we were talking about the fact that you need to advance your central pawns to gain space advantage. Now, here White moves a pawn on a flank. Why is that so? Well, actually, White already gained the space advantage in the center thanks to his advanced pawns on c4 and e4. So, he already enjoys a space advantage in the center. Now, he just expands further and starts gaining space advantage even on the side. White played

18.Rc1

frankly, I do not know why.

18...Rc8

Now White played a normal move,

19.Be2

just continuing his development. Black played

19...Ka7

because he's not sure what to do. White played

20.Rhd1

just to bring the last piece into play. That's "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" in action. By the way, Black cannot really capture the h5-pawn here because White will just grab the e5-knight and Black cannot recapture due to the pin over the d-file, so the d7-rook will be hanging. That is bad for Black; it is why he cannot capture the pawn right away. Instead he played

20...Rdd8

just to put his rook on a protected square. Now White protected his h5-pawn by playing [20...Nxh5 21.Bxe5 dxe5 22.Qxd7]

21.g4

That's not only a protection for the pawn, it also ensures that, once again, White pushes his pawns forward and gains more and more space. Black played

21...Ng8

Diagram

White's turn

It's a move which seems to be quite illogical at first sight, but you can just notice that, thanks to White's strong pawns, the pawn chain (h5, g4, f3 and e4), Black's knight on f6 now becomes somewhat useless; it cannot go forward because all those squares are taken away from him.

Thus, Black decided to move his knight somewhere else, perhaps to e7; so he started this maneuver. But anyway, that's something weird that just shows the power of White's position. White continued in the same style, he played

22.Bg3

preparing one more pawn advancement –pawn to f4–, which not only gains more space, but it will also kick Black's e5-knight away, which is the ultimate goal of all your limitation strategy: to push your opponent's pieces backward, to push them to the edge, to make them inactive, to immobilize them. Black played

22...Ne7 23.f4

White just pushed the pawn forward.

23...N5c6

And the knight went back to c6. Now, White played another very smart move,

24.Bf3

Some time ago, we talked about the importance of supporting your advanced pawns by your pieces; and it is always important to do that. So now, thanks to White's f3-bishop, it will support those advanced pawns and Black will never have a chance to attack them. Because, when you advance your pawns forward, on one hand, it is great –that gives you greater space–; but, on the other hand, those pawns become easier potential targets for the attack of your opponent because those pawns become closer to the opponent's pieces.

And that is why it's always good to remind yourself that you need to provide enough support for your advanced pawns. This is exactly what Kasparov did by playing Bf3. OK. Now Black played

24...Rb8 25.Bh4

It's “The Principle of Maximum Activity” in action, going forward and, at the same time, it now restricts the activity of that knight on e7 because it's pinned due to the rook that is standing behind. Black played

25...Rd7

Now, we may notice that, over all, Black's position is so awkward. His pieces are standing on the way of each other and he cannot do anything, his pieces cannot go forward at all; and Black is really not sure of what to do here. He played a number of relatively useless moves in his territory, which didn't give him anything because he was just confused. And that is the power of limitation –the power of having space advantage. Now, Kasparov rushed into the straightforward attack: he played

26.Nb5+

which is not actually a sacrifice because he's going to capture the piece back very soon.

26...axb5 27.cxb5

Let's see what happened in the actual game. Black played

27...Na5

He could have moved the knight elsewhere, but it couldn't change much anyway. And now, after the exchange,

28.Nxa5 bxa5

there's a winning combination for White; so you can think about that for a second. Of course, you are welcome to recollect what you've studied in “The Principle of Attack”. At the beginning of this course, we said that you want to go forward to the opponent's half of the board and take or attack something there. If you follow this "Principle of Attack", you can guess Kasparov's moves easily.

29.Rxc5

which is the winning shot because now, if Black captures that rook with the queen, Qxc5, White will just continue with Qxa5+; and this is checkmate in the next move. This doesn't work for Black. Let's take a step back. In the actual game, he captured the rook by the pawn, but it didn't help either.

29...dxc5 [29...Qxc5 30.Qxa5+ Ba6 31.Qxa6#] **30.Qxd7**

White captures that rook on d7, and Black is now somewhat helpless. If Black trades off the queens, you can see that the knight is attacked and, thanks to the white smart strategy of advancing his pawns and limiting the opponent's activity, the knight cannot go forward because all those squares are taken away by White's pawns.

This is quite a funny thing because, at first sight, it looks like there are numerous ways for the knight to go forward, but all of them are taken away! So, it can only go back, which is a sad thing for Black because White can easily collect all those pawns along the seventh rank and, actually, Black's pieces are still doing nothing standing in the corner on the edge of the board.

30...Qxf4

In the actual game, something even nicer happened. After White captured on d7, just some steps back, instead of trading off the queens, Black just captured White's pawn on f4. Probably, he was hoping for some sort of counterattack. But here White found another brilliant way just to win the game right away. [30...Qxd7 31.Rxd7 Nc8]

31.Rd6 1–0

And, all of a sudden, Black realized that there was no normal defense against the straightforward checkmate in one move after rook to a6. And Black simply resigned.

In this game, we have seen how Kasparov, throughout the whole game, followed this limitation strategy by advancing his pawns; firstly, his central pawns, and then, his pawns on the flank to limit the activity of the opponent's pieces and make him totally inactive, totally immobile, where Kasparov could do whatever he wanted.

In this lesson, we were talking about the key to victory called “The Principle of Limitation”. It says: **restrict the opponent's activity**. During the game of chess, you have two equal choices: you can either play a move to increase your activity or play a move to restrict your opponent's activity. And both of these things are equally good

for you. If you wish to limit your opponent's activity, there are two main ways on how this can be done:

The way number one is to get space advantage. You do this by advancing your pawns, especially your central pawns, forward and get an space advantage in this way. The second way to limit your opponent's activity is to take a particular piece as a target, and restrict it.

You want to attack it, you want to kick it away out of the center, to push it to the edge of the chessboard, to take away the squares where it can go to and, ideally to make it totally immobile. In that way, you make the opponent's pieces somewhat useless for him; and you get to the situation where you have the total domination, and you can do whatever you want. So, remember “The Principle of Limitation” to restrict the opponent's activity; and you'll always be in a dominating position; and you'll be able to win games easily

Conclusions

Principle of Limitation: restrict opponent’s activity.

2 Methods of Limitation:

- Get space advantage (advance central pawns)
- Restrict the opponent’s pieces (blockade his pawns, limit his pieces).

Lesson 6 - How to Control the Center

Hi and welcome into the next key to victory. This lesson is called "How to Control the Center". At first, this topic may seem very simple and straightforward. On the other hand, there are so many rules about this. In this quick lesson, we'll just streamline this for you and, therefore, we'll narrow down this broad subject into a very simple and practical guideline that you can follow in your practical games.

First of all, when we are talking about the center, what do I mean by this?

First and foremost, we are talking about the 4 squares located in the center of the chessboard. In addition to that, often times when talking about the center, people refer to the so-called "large center". Here we are referring to the squares adjoining to the 4 central squares, they still exert strong influence on the central squares and therefore this whole area may be called the "**large center**". Chess strategy suggests that you need to control the center. In this lesson, we'll talk about exactly what that means for you and how you should be doing that.

Let's start from the very fundamental ideas, and then, we'll go to more advanced and complex situations because it's really important to understand those fundamentals; then, anything else becomes super easy. From the very beginning of the chess game, in order to develop your pieces, you need to move your pawns.

So, which pawns are you going to move? There are so many different openings, but "The Principle of the Center" suggests a very simple idea: **go towards the center**. This idea is applied both for your pawns and your pieces. Therefore, if you wish to move your pawns, you need, first of all, to move your central pawns, those that are situated on the d- and e-lines. Let's say you play here

1.d4 d5

Now, let's apply the principle of the center to your piece. Let's say, you wish to develop your b1-knight. Where should it go? There are a few options: it can go to d2 or c3 or to a3. As we know, according to "The Principle of Maximum Activity", we would like to go forward and, therefore, we can safely exclude the d2-square from our choice. Then, we are left with the two remaining options, out of which we need to go to c3, just following "The Principle of the Center".

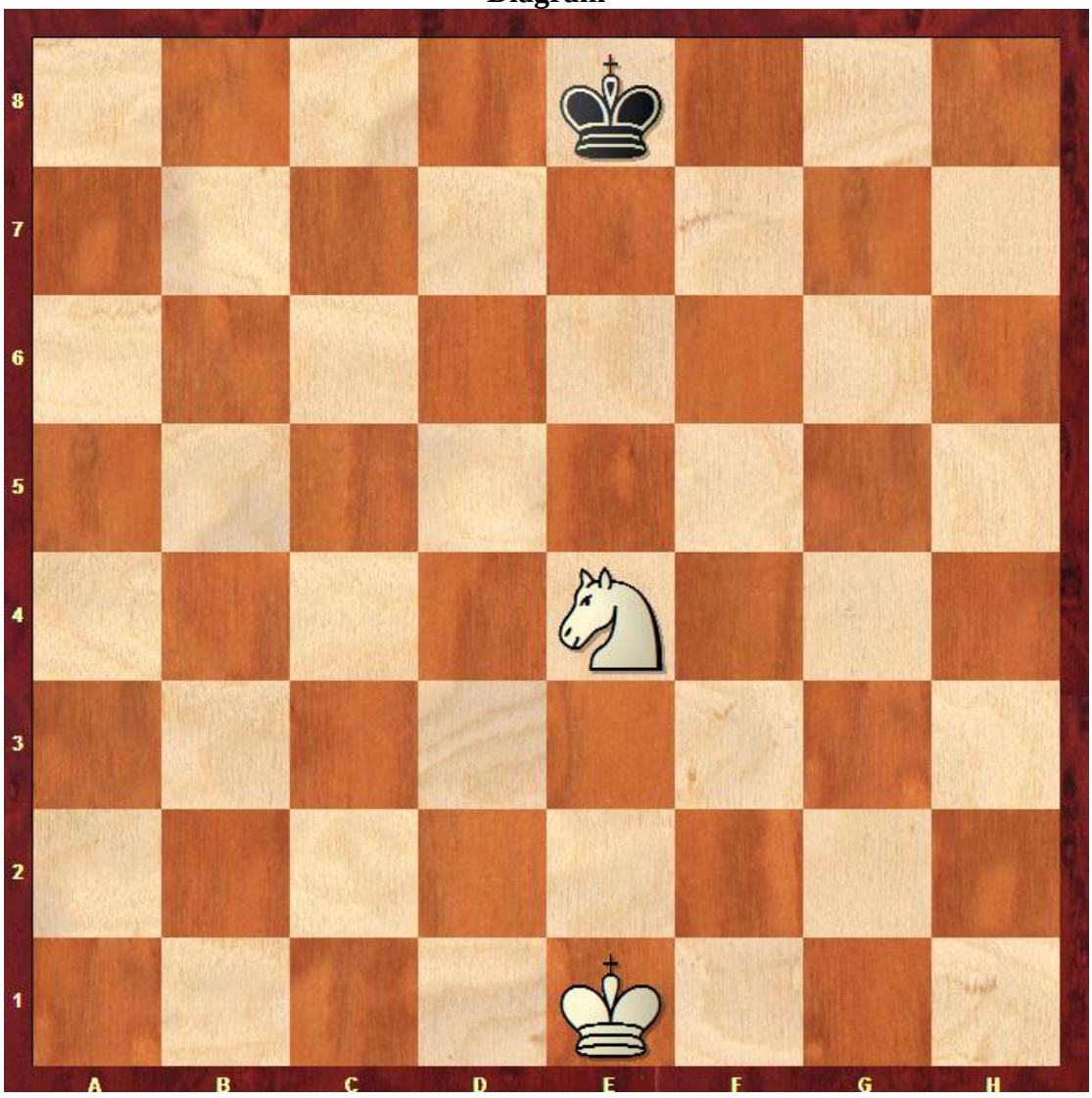
Once again, we need to go towards the center; Nc3 will simply follow this rule. Therefore, if you wish to develop the b1-knight, at this position or later on in this game, you should normally go to c3.

That's how "The Principle of the Center" works in a practical game. While "The Principle of Maximum Activity" says that you need to go forward, "The Principle of the Center" says that you need to go towards the center; so, if you have a choice of whether to go to the side or towards the center, you need to go towards the center.

That is how the principle works, but, before we go to the practical examples, let me elaborate a little bit on why the principle is so and why we should go towards the center.

2.Nc3

Diagram



If we put a knight in the center of the board (e4), you may notice that it's using its best potential. It controls 8 squares, which is the maximum that the knight can possibly control. Now, let's compare this situation with another one (knight on h4).

This time, instead of the center, the knight stands on the edge. As you may notice, it decreases the power of the knight 2 times –instead of 8 squares, now it controls only 4. Let's compare this with the last example (knight on h1).

This time, I placed the knight in the corner of the board, as far from the center as it possibly can –it controls only 2 squares. Therefore, compared to the position where the knight was standing, on e4 and controlling 8 squares; now it controls only 2. Therefore, its power decreases 4 times, just because of the wrong placement of the knight. That is the first reason why the central squares are the most important ones. It is because, if you place your piece there, it becomes the most powerful; it uses its full potential.

In addition to that, there is one more reason why it is good to place your pieces in the center. If you pay attention to White's h1-knight and ask yourself: Where can it possibly help White do something, either attacking or defending?

You may notice that it can actually work only in the very little area on the kingside of White's territory. For instance, it cannot really join your attack on the queenside because it would simply take too long to transfer your knight there. Now, we're comparing this with the central position of the knight (on e4).

You may notice that the knight can now jump anywhere, almost to any side of the board and take part in your attack there. If you wish to attack the opponent's king, you're welcome! The knight can go forward in one move and start attacking the king (Nd6 or Nf6). If you wish to do something on the queenside, you can easily move the knight there (Nc5); and the knight starts attacking tons of squares over the queenside.

So, as you can see, standing in the center, the knight is really mobile; it can join the attack, it can also retreat and join the defense if this is required; so it can go anywhere! That is why it's really mobile and you can use it on any side of the chessboard. That is the second greatest advantage of having your pieces standing in the center: they are mobile and you can use them for playing on any part of the chessboard.

Here's a new example. Of course, this position is not from a real game. The first idea regarding “The Principle of the Center” was pretty straightforward: If you wish to decide where your piece should go, it should go towards the center. Therefore, if we are talking about White's b1-knight, it should go to c3 (Nc3).

Then, later on, you will wish to put it somewhere on the central squares, d5 or e4; but here comes a problem: If your opponent is an experienced player, he will try to counteract you. So, he understands what you wish to do, and he will put up some opposition. Now Black puts his knight on f6 and he says: "Wait a minute, I do not want White's knight to stand there". What should you do in such a case?

Here comes the second consequence of “The Principle of the Center”. It says: **fight for the center and occupy it**. Ideally, you wish to just place your pieces in the center, but your opponent will counteract and, therefore, you will have to fight for the control over the central squares. How can you do it? One way is that you try to provide greater control over the central squares.

For example, if currently, you and your opponent have equal control over those 2 central squares (e4 and d5) you can bring up one more piece to strengthen your control. You can play Bg2. Now, in addition to the knight controlling those 2 squares, you have the bishop doing the same job!

Therefore, if I just play any move for Black, Kf8, you can notice that in the following move, Nd5, you can actually bring your piece to the center and, after the exchange, Nxd5, Bxd5, you will be left with your piece standing in the center and none of the opponent's pieces standing there.

This is one way of how you can control and fight for the control over the center. It is just to bring more pieces to control those central squares. The second idea would be to attack the opponent's pieces that influence the center.

In this example, instead of Bg2 and the exchange, you can play Bg5, threatening the f6-knight and forcing it to go away somewhere. Once the knight goes backward, you can happily put your knight onto d5. That is the second example of how you can fight for the center, attacking the opponent's pieces that influence the center: Those are the 2 basic principles of the center.

The first idea is that you need to go towards the center. The second idea is that you need to fight for the control over the central squares –fight for the center. For instance, you play Bg5, and then, after you win this fight for the control over the central squares, you can happily occupy it. That is the second idea: fight for the center and occupy it! Now, let's see how those generalities work in practical examples.

1.Nc3 Nf6 2.Bg2 [2.Bg5 Nd7 3.Nd5]

Kasparov, Garry (2735) – Weemaes, Ronald (2350) [A18]
Cannes sim, 1988

Let's have a look at the game between Kasparov, playing White and Weemaes, playing Black.

1.c4

Let's take just a moment to talk about this move. I know it is a little weird to discuss the first move of a chess game, but I just want you to have a deep strategic understanding of the situation. And you don't just play the moves because they are so, or they are book recommendations. But you must really understand deeply the meaning of them and why Kasparov and other top players play them and not something else.

So, as we discussed, at the beginning of the chess game, you wish to get your control over the center and you wish to move towards the center. Therefore, if you wish to move your pawns, normally, you need to move your central pawns (either the d- or the e-pawn).

At the same time, we said that, there is the so-called "large center", which also includes the adjoining squares. Therefore, sometimes, White can also use the adjoining pawns such as the c- or the f-pawn, which will also help you get control over the central squares.

And, if we talk about those 2 pawns, on the c-file and the f-file, moving your f-pawn is a little bit dangerous because it somewhat opens up your king and, later on, your opponent can try to take advantage of this weakness. Therefore, if White does not want to move one of his central pawns (d or e) for some reason, maybe just for his opening preparation for the game, he usually moves the pawn to the c-file.

1...Nf6 2.Nc3

By the way, you may notice that something similar is going on with what we discussed in general. Black is trying to exert his control over the central squares and White is doing the same with his pawn and his knight. So, the fight for the center begins. Both opponents are trying to develop their pieces, but also to fight for the center.

2...e6

What do you think about this move, by the way? Is it good, bad or normal? In one of the previous lessons, we analyzed "The Principle of Maximum Activity", which says that you should go as forward as possible. So, if the pawn can go to e5, why do you go to e6? You can already see how easily you can detect the best moves, even if you know nothing about the opening theory of this particular line. [2...e5]

3.e4

Putting up your pawn in the center is always a good idea. By the way, we said that "The Principle of the Center" says that **you need to go towards the center, and that this applies both to your pawns and pieces**.

You may be wondering: why do I play pawns in the center so much? Instead, for example, let's say that White tries to bring his knight to the center: he plays Nf3, instead of e4, and, in the next move, he tries to bring his knight somewhere over those central squares, e5 or d4. You can see that, in either case, Black will so easily keep this knight away with his pawns. If White plays Ne5, it's so easy for Black to kick it away with his pawn (playing d6), his knight (Nc6) or some other way.

Therefore, ideally speaking, you wish to have your pieces in the center, but, in the opening stage, it's usually just impractical. You cannot really do that. Your pieces will be pushed away immediately. That is why, in the opening stage, you mainly use your pieces to occupy, to stand in the center. In the later stages of the game, in the middlegame and the endgame, you will be happy to actually locate your pieces there in the center. [3.Nf3 Be7 4.Ne5 d6 *(4...Nc6)*]

3...d5

He is also fighting for the center, which is the right thing to do. White played

4.e5

We discussed that one of the ways to fight for the center is to kick away the opponent's pieces that control the center. This is exactly what White is trying to do with this move. In addition to that, attacking moves are always something great. However, Black came up with a counterblow. He played

4...d4 5.exf6 dxc3

Here's a question for you: If you wish to capture Black's c3-pawn, you have a choice: you can capture it with the b- or the d-pawn. Which one should be the best? “The Principle of the Center” still applies here; you wish to move towards the center. If White took it with the d-pawn, that would actually move this pawn away from the central line, which you don’t want to do. You want to move towards the center and, thanks to this exchange, you can actually do that. By playing

6.bxc3

you can now involve your pawn, which was previously standing on b2 and was not controlling the center in any way. Now, you brought this pawn one step forward towards the center and it is starting to influence the center, which is a great thing for you.

6...Qxf6 7.d4

After this little battle over the central squares, Kasparov won it, and now he has one pawn in the center (d4) and one pawn in the large center (c4), while Black has nothing.

7...c5

He is still trying to fight for the center, even though it's not really effective here because we know that White's d4-pawn is already protected. The c5 move does not actually do much. Therefore, White just ignores it and plays

8.Nf3

Then this exchange happens:

8...cxd4 9.cxd4 Nc6

White continues with

10.a3

just preventing Black from giving a check on b4. And Black also makes a similar prophylactic move,

10...h6

preventing White from moving there with the bishop. So, White developed the bishop on the other square,

11.Bb2 Bd6 12.Bd3 0–0 13.0–0

This is a standard development of the pieces. And, at this point, Black decided to renew his fight for the center. He played

13...e5

Diagram

White's turn

Now, what do you think about this position? Should White capture that pawn on e5 and make that exchange? What do you think? If White actually does that, let's just see the consequences.

After this exchange, dxe5, Black would certainly recapture, Nxe5, and he's threatening your knight on f3; so, White would probably have to continue taking there and, as a result, you can see a position where in the central squares there are no pawns (neither white nor black) and there's even Black's queen standing there at the moment. So, we can see that there isn't any advantage for White and that is why this kind of exchange would be just useless for White. In the actual game, Kasparov did not go for that exchange; instead he pushed

14.d5

He's trying to kick away Black's knight out of the center. The knight really went back to b8, [14.dxe5 Nxe5 15.Nxe5 Bxe5 16.Bxe5 Qxe5]

14...Nb8

which is, once again, one achievement for White, pushing one more black piece out of the center. And here, he continued with something similar: he played

15.c5 Bxc5

which is not really a sacrifice because, right in the next move, Black can take the pawn back,

16.Nxe5

But, as a result of this operation, we can now evaluate the consequences. At the moment, White has his pawn on d5; Black has no pawns in the center whatsoever. And, in addition to that, White has this strong knight standing on the central square, e5.

So, once again, Kasparov, through his smart strategy of fighting for the center, pushing his opponent's pieces and pawns away from the center, and putting his pieces there; manages to win this battle over the center and, once again, he establishes full control over the central squares. Let's see what happens next. Currently, Black started to feel worried about the way White's bishop is looking at Black's queen and maybe some potential discovered attack, so he decided to play

16...Qf4

White continued with

17.Rc1

“The Principle of the Least Active Piece” in action. And there, it also attacks the bishop on c5 and, maybe in some situations, even that bishop on c8. Black played

17...b6

and White moved forward with

18.Rc4

Once again, you can see the advantages of White's domination in the center. Thanks to this domination, he's free to move his pieces wherever he wants. You can imagine that if a black pawn were standing on d5, instead of the white pawn, of course, such a move like Rc4 would be totally impossible for White –that pawn would simply capture the rook. But thanks to the fact that White won the battle over the center, now he has full control, and he can do whatever he wants. Black played

18...Qg5

And here is another interesting situation. In the actual game, Kasparov played

19.h4

and won the game later on. Here, actually White's position is so strong that he can attack in different ways, and all of them would be quite strong. However, there was even something better for White; he could just continue going all the way in the center. And I think that we should better look at this best move, instead of what actually happened in the game.

White should have played pawn to d6. This is a really strong move with multiple ideas. One idea is that this pawn can eventually just go forward, if Black ignores it and lets White do this. The next idea is that, by playing d6, White opens up this diagonal (h1-a8); where he can move his queen to f3, or his bishop to e4 and attack Black's rook.

For example, if Black just took that pawn, Bxd6, which seems to be the most obvious way; one of the easiest ways for White would be just to play Be4, and the rook on a8 is captured. In addition to that, White would also attack the bishop on d6, and here, either Black supports or takes back, White can support the e5-knight by playing pawn to f4. There's no need really for White to calculate all these lines. It's just to show the power of White's position and the multiple opportunities that he has to play here and there, all around the board, just because he has this strong centralized position of his pieces.

Surprisingly, at this point, instead of Be4, the computer even suggests a quite brilliant combination: it suggests White to play Nxf7. So, all of a sudden, White switches to attack on the opponent's kingside. And now Black is really in trouble. If he captures that f7-knight with the rook, White can just recapture that bishop on c8 (Rxc8); and again, Black is in big trouble.

In the following moves, White can attack in multiple directions. He can attack from this side (Qb3) with his queen, if he wishes to attack the opponent's king. He can attack the rook from here (Be4). So, he can do whatever he wants –it's totally winning for White.

If we take some steps back, if Black captures the knight on f7 with his king, there are again multiple ways for White. The simpler way would be to just play Qf3, with a double attack on Black's king and the rook on a8. That is the one winning option for White.

And, once again, there's one thing I want to show you here because it's quite beautiful, really. It's a suggestion of the computer again. It's the Bh7 move! A little bit of a shocking idea because it does not capture nor does it attack somewhat directly and, therefore, it's somewhat unusual.

At the same time, it's really beautiful. By playing Bh7, White just cuts off the escape path for Black's king. Therefore, now the king becomes a real target for White's attack in the following moves. And it cannot escape really. In the next move, White is going to play Qf3, attacking the king directly; and there is a great chance that the king will be checkmated very soon. In addition to that, of course, all of the other threats that we have discussed about earlier are still alive. White still can play Qf3, attacking the a8-

rook. At the moment, the d6-bishop is hanging; so, there are lots of other troubles that Black will face here.

That would be a really brilliant finish of White's attack; and just one of the key takeaways from this game is how important it is for you to control the center. If you can do it, as you can see in this position, White can attack whatever he wants: Black's king, the a8-rook on the queenside, he could attack in the center... He can basically do whatever he wants, just because of his strong control over the center.

"The Principle of the Center" suggests 2 practical guidelines. 1) Go towards the center. If you have a choice of whether to move to a side or towards the center, normally you've got to move towards the center. 2) Fight for the center and occupy it. Your opponent will try to establish his control over the central squares, but you need to fight for the center and win this battle.

You can do this by bringing more of your pieces that will provide greater control of the center for you, or you can push away the opponent's pieces that are influencing the center. Either way, you are going to win this battle of the control over the central squares and, ultimately, to put up your pieces there in the center. This will make sure that you are dominating the game and, later on, you will be able to develop your attack in multiple directions. [19.d6 Bxd6 20.Be4 (20.Nxf7 Rxf7 (20...Kxf7 21.Qf3+ *(21.Bh7)*) 21.Rxc8+)]

19...Qd8 20.Qf3 Qd6 21.Rf4 f5 22.Nc4 Qd7 23.Re1 Bb7 24.Bxf5 Bxd5 25.Qg4 Qb7 26.Ne3 Bc6 27.Be6+ Kh8 28.Rxf8+ Bxf8 29.Qf4 Na6 30.Qxh6# 1–0

Conclusions

Principle of the Center:

- Go towards the center.
- Fight for the center, occupy it.

Lesson 7 - The Key to Your Stable Progress

Welcome into the lesson #7. Before we get to the actual content of the lesson, let me just congratulate you for reaching the course to this point. By now, you've already studied all the main 6 principles for playing the right chess moves; so, congratulations for that! That was very well done by you.

I understand that you have a lot of things in life and you need to allocate some time for them; so, it's really a very good accomplishment that you've dedicated that time and have studied all the previous lessons, and now you know that your chess skills are going to get to the next level.

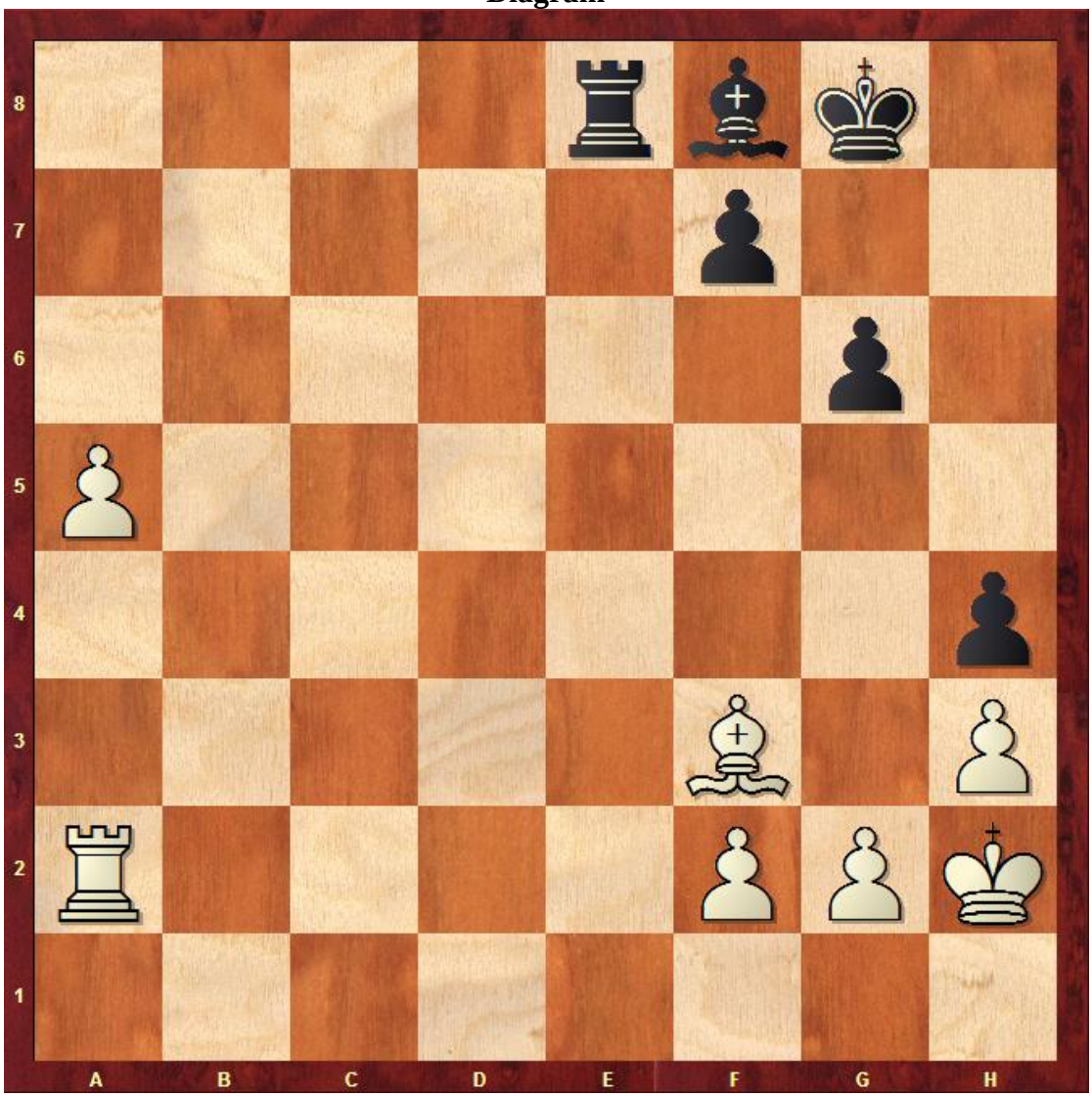
Now, one thing that you may be wondering is why I am talking about the end of the principles, even though there's still this lesson #7, which is supposed to have one more principle. It's just because the "7th Key to Victory" deals not with chess strategy, but rather with one thinking pattern which is very important.

One of the most often queries by the students that I receive is about how to avoid some annoying mistakes and annoying losses and how to get stable results. If you think about your chess progress, pretty often, you may notice that there is a lack of stability. Some day, you can play a very brilliant game and win even against a high rated opponent, but other day, something happens and you play badly and you can even lose an annoying game against a weaker opponent.

Moreover, such shift can happen even within one game where, for instance, you are playing well at the beginning –in the opening– and, in the middlegame, you've got a winning advantage; but then, just due to one sudden oversight, you lost the game and you feel, of course, pissed off because you realize that this is an undeserved win for your opponent and that was your victory which should have happened, but somehow did not.

That's exactly what we are going to talk about in this lesson: How to make sure that your chess progress is stable; that you play well all the time and, if you're stronger than your opponent, you should be winning those games, without any exceptions.

Diagram



White's turn

Let's go to the specific examples to put it under a clearer perspective, so you can understand what we are talking about here. So, welcome again to the lesson #7 called: "Key to Your Stable Progress". This is a position that happened in a game between 2 of my friends; they're both amateur players, around 1600 rating. It was a real game and it happened not in the Internet but in the real life not long ago; and I was just observing this game. It was White to play and the game continued with

1.a6 Bd6+

It was a blitz game, by the way. At this point, White just played a7 and Black's player said: "Wait a minute. Your king is under check", which is actually true. White had to react to the check and he couldn't move his pawn at this point. If that were a real tournament game, if you played an illegal move in a blitz game; then, unfortunately you would lose it, just by the rules of chess. So, this annoying move at a7 would cost White a well deserved victory because, definitely, White's position is winning.

That's exactly one of the situations I'd like to discuss with you. Because, often times, when you play a certain oversight during the game of chess, it's not because of your chess skills or luck, it's just due to our human nature. It's because we're carried away with our own ideas, and we don't pay equal attention to our opponent's plan. And that is why we can easily overlook the opponent's threats, his intentions, his plans, etc.

This is exactly what happened in this game with the white player. And that happens with all of us; so, this is perfectly normal. However, as they say, "forewarned is forearmed". Therefore, if you know that this is a problem and one of the most common reasons of losing during a game of chess, you can just address it and prepare yourself for it.

And, what is the way to deal with this situation? Well, it's pretty simple. When your opponent just plays a move, like in this game, where Black played Bd6; take a moment to ask yourself: What is his idea? What is the idea of the opponent's last move? If you just take a few seconds to think about that, you'll never overlook the opponent's ideas.

All right, now let's go ahead. I said that White's king is in check and, for instance, it's your turn here; how would you play here as White? What do you think? Well, honestly we have to do something with the king. One way could be just to move the king backward, to g1. What do you think about this move? Is this a good choice for White? Not really, and it's because the fact that, if you play the king to g1, there's a powerful reply from your opponent's side.

That is the second thing that you always need to take into account while playing a game of chess. Before playing your move, you need to make sure that it's safe, that you are not losing material and that there's no direct threat over your king, or any other significant troubles that can possibly happen to your position. For instance, if White really moves the king to g1, are there any attacking replies that Black can play here? Yes, indeed. He can play Re1, and this is checkmate in one!

If that happened in a real game, that would be one of those very typical scenarios where you played a good game, but then, you lost it due to one sudden annoying oversight. How could White prevent it? Well, it is really easy. He just has to play g3, covering his king; and then, he is easily winning because Black has really no defense against the simple promotion of White's pawn to a new queen.

Let's, once again, draw the main conclusions from this example and, then, we'll go to apply them to other positions. Let's just take a few steps backwards. The first conclusion is: after your opponent plays the move, take a moment to ask yourself what his idea is.

This way, you detect whether the opponent's move is dangerous or not. And the second thing: before you play a move on the board, ask yourself if it is safe. More particularly, ask yourself: **What are the attacking replies of my opponent?** What are the attacking replies he can play? And if you detect that there is no danger for you, you just safely and confidently can play the move that you intended to play. However, if you find out that there is a certain trouble that may happen for you after this move,

you will conclude that this move is not safe and you've got to do something else; like in this example, it was the move pawn to g3.

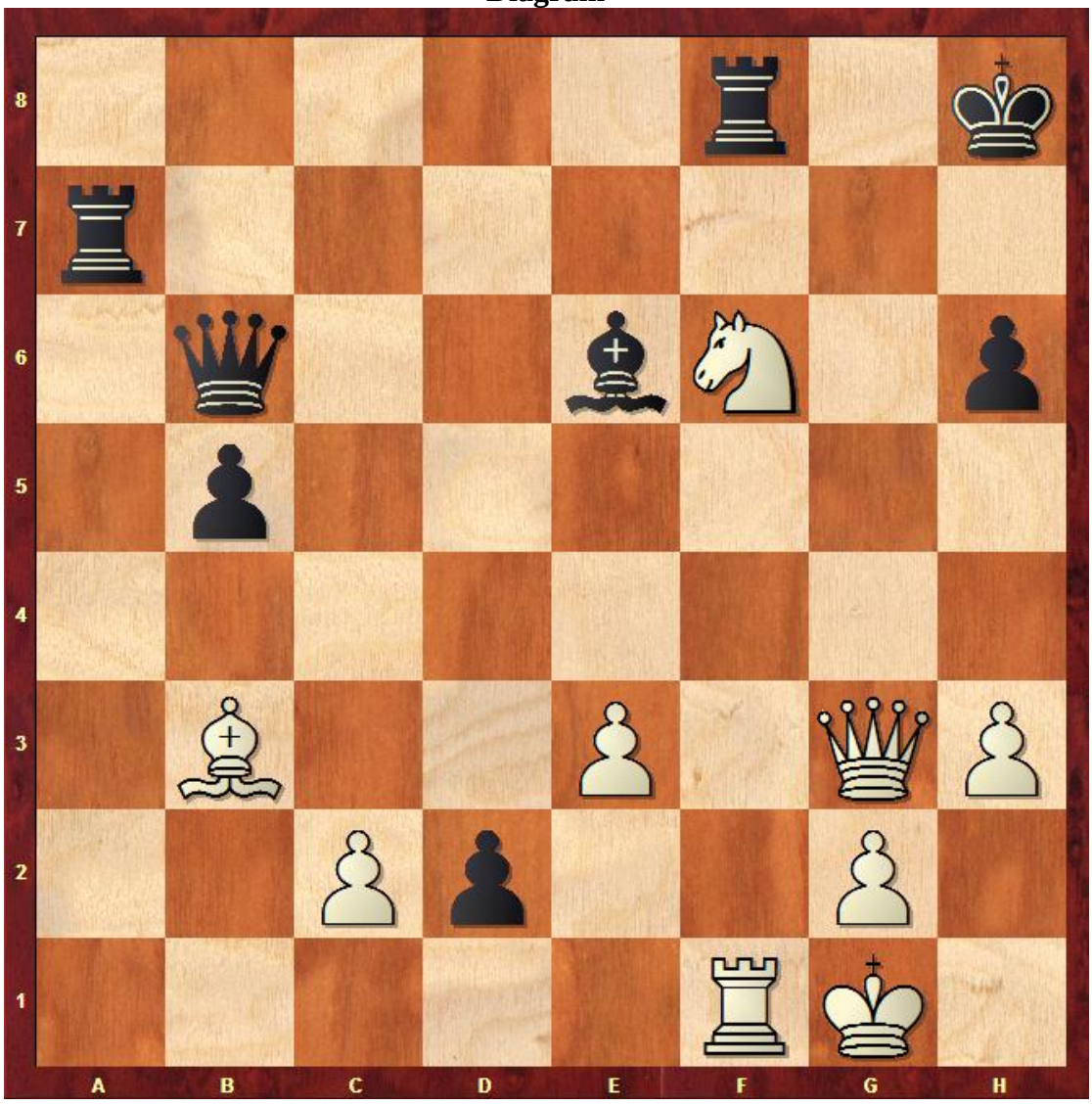
All right, now let's see how these 2 general ideas apply in all the positions in any games that you play.

1...Bd6+ 2.Kg1 *(2.g3)* 2...Re1# **0–1**

Kramnik, Vladimir (2800) – Aronian, Levon (2794) [C50]
FIDE Candidates, 22.03.2018

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.d3 a6 6.Nd5 Nxd5 7.Bxd5 d6 8.Be3 Bxe3 9.fxe3 0–0 10.0–0 Nb8 11.b4 Nd7 12.Qd2 c6 13.Bb3 a5 14.a3 Nf6 15.h3 h6 16.Rab1 b5 17.Qc3 Bd7 18.Rf2 Qb6 19.Re1 Rfe8 20.Nh4 c5 21.Ref1 cxb4 22.Qe1 d5 23.axb4 dxe4 24.bxa5 Rxa5 25.Ng6 Be6 26.Nxe5 exd3 27.Rxf6 gxf6 28.Rxf6 d2 29.Qg3+ Kf8 30.Rf1 Ra7 31.Ng6+ Kg7 32.Nf4+ Kh8 33.Nh5 f6 34.Nxf6 Rf8

Diagram



White's turn

This is a game between Kramnik and Aronian. It is White to move. You may think for a second of how you would play here as White. And, more particularly, I would like to ask you: What do you think about the Qg6 move? What do you think? Is it a good move, a bad move or just a normal one?

I'll give you a few seconds to think about it. At first sight, the move seems to be really great. If you play the queen there, it creates a very straightforward threat of checkmate, taking on h6; and it's not quite obvious how Black can prevent it. However, before playing the Qg6 move on the board, we know that there's one last quick check you need to make. You need to check whether this move is safe or not. And that's why, before playing this move on the board, you need to ask yourself: What are the attacking replies that the opponent can play?

We have already discussed this in the previous lessons: How do you find attacking moves for yourself? You look at the opponent's half of the board and ask yourself how you can move there and take or attack something.

By the way, that's exactly the way you can find a move like Qg6. And, if you need to find attacking moves for your opponent, you do the same process in reverse. You imagine that you play that move, Qg6, and then, you ask yourself: What are the forward moves that my opponent can play on my half of the board to take or attack something?

With that in mind, if you ask that, you can find that Black can capture the pawn on e3, with a check to White's king and, at the same time, protect the pawn on h6. Thus, Black not only neutralizes the Qxh6 threat, but he also puts in check White's king, wins a pawn, and everything is just great for him. Therefore, even though the Qg6 move is perfectly logical in this position, it would be a blunder –moreover, it would be a losing blunder for White.

That was just one of those examples about how important is to make that anti-blunder check –to make sure that the move that you are intending to play is safe and you may actually play it.

Let's see what happened in the real game. Kramnik did that anti-blunder check because, I'm sure that he considered Qg6 in the real game; and, instead he played

35.Qf4

It's not only attacking the pawn on h6, just like after Qg6, but also he's keeping an eye on that pawn on e3. Black played [35.Qg6 Qxe3+]

35...Rh7

to protect the pawn.

36.Qe5

The fun thing is that, actually, we have already observed this example in another video lesson of this course. At this point Black played

36...Qc7

And here was that brilliant deadly winning move of White

37.Ne8+

And here Black resigned because, after

37...Qxe5 38.Rxf8+

there is mate in one move. A brilliant combination for Kramnik, more importantly, he avoided falling into the trap, right at the beginning of this example. He made the anti-blunder check and he made sure that the moves he was playing were safe for him

38...Bg8 39.Rxg8# 1–0

Keres, Paul – Levenfish, Grigory [C83]
URS-ch17 Moscow (9), 30.10.1949

Here is the next example. It's the game between Keres and Levenfish, two Grandmasters.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0–0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.c3 Be7 10.a4 b4 11.Nd4 Nxe5 12.f4 Bg4 13.Qc2 c5 14.fxe5 cxd4 15.cxd4 Rc8 16.Qd3 0–0 17.Nd2 Ng5 18.Rf2 Rc6 19.Nf1 Bh5 20.Ng3 Bg6 21.Nf5 Kh8 22.Be3 Ne6 23.Qd2 Bg5 24.Nd6 Bxe3 25.Qxe3 Nc7

At this point, it was White to play. He played

26.a5

Now it's Black's turn; and I would like to ask your opinion about that. How would you play here as Black? I'll give you a few seconds to think about it. Well, of course, there's a hint. You know that this lesson is actually about the 7th Key to Victory, “The Key to Your Stable Progress”, and the principle is called "The Anti-blunder Check".

And, therefore, the question, "How would you play here as Black?" is a little bit tricky because, instead of thinking about Black's move, the first thing you have to do when it's your turn is to ask yourself what the idea of the opponent's last move is.

So, the first thing you have to think about, when you are playing a game of chess is: Once your opponent plays the a5 move, ask yourself: What is the idea of that move? What is he going to do next?

If you think about that for a second, you may find out that the reason for the a5 move was that White prepared Ba4, which would attack and capture the c6-rook in the

following move. Is this a threat? Yes, it is and, definitely, you need to address it somehow. All right, in the game Black played

26...Qe7

Diagram

White's turn

Now, I would like to make one little trick once again and I would like to ask you to think about this position from White's side –let me flip the board for you. Imagine you are playing White, how would you play here as White? What do you think? Keep in mind that I'm just as tricky as in the previous move; although I'm asking you how you would play here as White, just as always, you can ask yourself in reality: What is the idea of Black's last move?

What is the idea of Black playing Qe7? Maybe, he just blundered your threat of Ba4, but maybe, he prepared something. What do you think? What if White played Ba4 here? –That would be a big blunder because Black prepared and has the Rdx6 move. Yes, he prepared to simply grab your knight using the pin along the e-file. If White fell into this trap, he would lose a piece in one move and would, most probably, lose

the game afterwards. That just shows you once again the great importance of having this anti-blunder thinking all the time. White noticed this threat and, in the actual game, he just played

27.Qd2

to remove the queen from the eventual pin. At the same time, he's attacking the b4-pawn; therefore, Black played [27.Ba4 Rxd6]

27...Rb8

to protect the pawn, but now, White can safely play

28.Ba4

which was his original intention; and now Black is in a big trouble. Black's rook is trapped on c6; it has no square to retreat. If he tries to cover the diagonal by playing Nb5, that still doesn't help much. White can just grab the knight and win the b4-pawn and, then, he has the strong knight on d6, the passed a-pawn which can go forward in the future. So, White has not only a winning position, but within several moves, he wins the game.

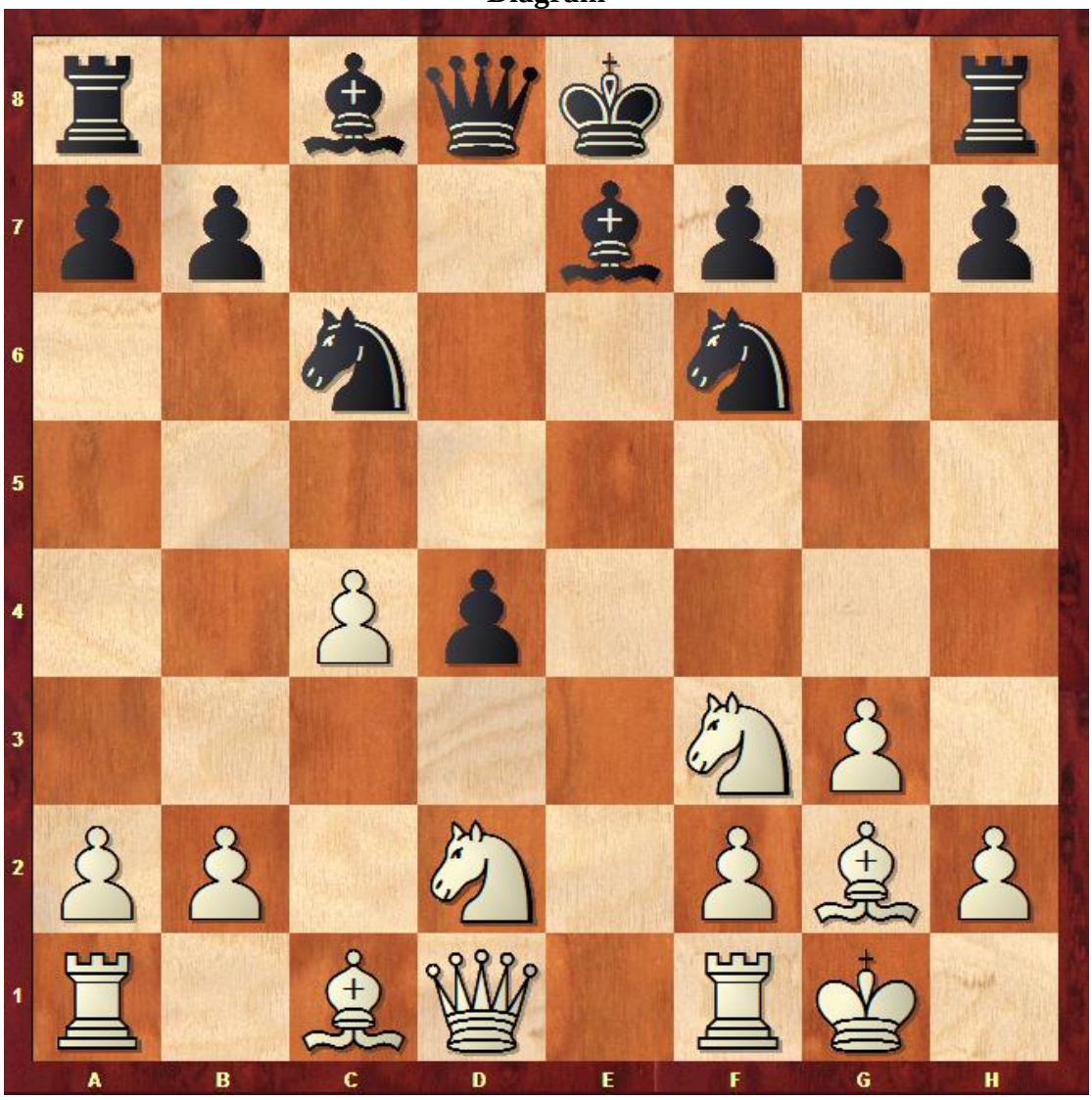
28...Rc4 [28...Nb5 29.Bxb5 axb5]
29.Nxc4 dxc4 30.Rc1 Qe6 31.d5 Nxd5 32.Rxc4 Ne7 33.Bb3 Qxe5 34.Re2 Qf6 35.Qxb4 1–0

Saigin, Vladimir – Tal, Mihail [E01]
Master Classification m Riga (8), 1954

Here is the next game. The black player is Tal, a former World Champion and the great master of attack; and the white player is Saigin, a less famous person.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 e6 4.g3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 d5 6.Bg2 e5 7.Nf3 d4 8.0–0 Nc6 9.e3 Be7 10.exd4 exd4 11.Nbd2

Diagram



Black's turn

It is Black to play; and now, I would like to ask you a question. Let's say you're playing Black and you decided at this moment to play Be6, which is one of the ways for Black to finalize the development, so it does make a lot of sense. What do you think about this move, Be6?

Is it a good move or a bad one? Obviously, before playing this move on the board, you need to make the anti-blunder check, the way we do it all the time before every move that you are going to play. So, before playing that move on the board, you need to ask yourself: What are the attacking replies that my opponent can play? More specifically, you think about the moves of his pieces forward to your half of the board that would take or attack something. So, if you move your bishop to e6, are there any forward moves of the white pieces to your half of the board that would eventually attack something?

There is indeed one move that White can play. If you play Be6, actually there are not many attacks that White can play here. If we're talking about moves on Black's half of the board, then, maybe, this move (Ng5) is the only one. That makes it easier for you

because you need to think only about this move. This move is not a very significant attack but, anyway, it attacks your bishop, which will also compromise your pawn structure and would definitely worsen your position; if you let this exchange to happen.

The next question for you is this: Should you worry about White's Ng5 move? The answer is: not really. After Ng5, there is a very easy way for Black to counter that threat. He can just remove that bishop, he can move it forward, following "The Principle of Maximum Activity" –it should go forward.

So, you can play Bg4; or even, if you just play Bf5, that would also be fine. But Bg4 is simply the best one –the most forward move–; and you not only remove the bishop from the attack, but you also attack White's queen, and everything is good for you.

Therefore, we may conclude that White's Ng5 move was somewhat an attacking move, but it didn't really damage you too much. That is why there is no reason for you to worry about it. And, in the position that we just discussed a few moves ago, it was perfectly fine for Black to play Be6.

The point that I would like to highlight here is that, even though you need to make that anti-blunder check and check for attacking replies from your opponent, it does not mean that you should really worry about them all the time. You just check whether your move is safe, if there is any damage that your opponent can make to your position.

If you notice that he has some attacking moves, but they are not dangerous, then there is no reason to worry about them and you can just easily go forward with your intention.

All right, once again, when your opponent plays a move, you ask yourself whether it's dangerous for you or not; and before you play your move on the board, you think about the attacking replies of your opponent. Therefore, you always keep an eye on the opponent's threats, but you are going to react to them only in case they're truly dangerous for you. Otherwise, you just ignore them and go forward with your own plan.

11...Be6 12.Re1 [12.Ng5 Bg4 *(12...Bf5)*]

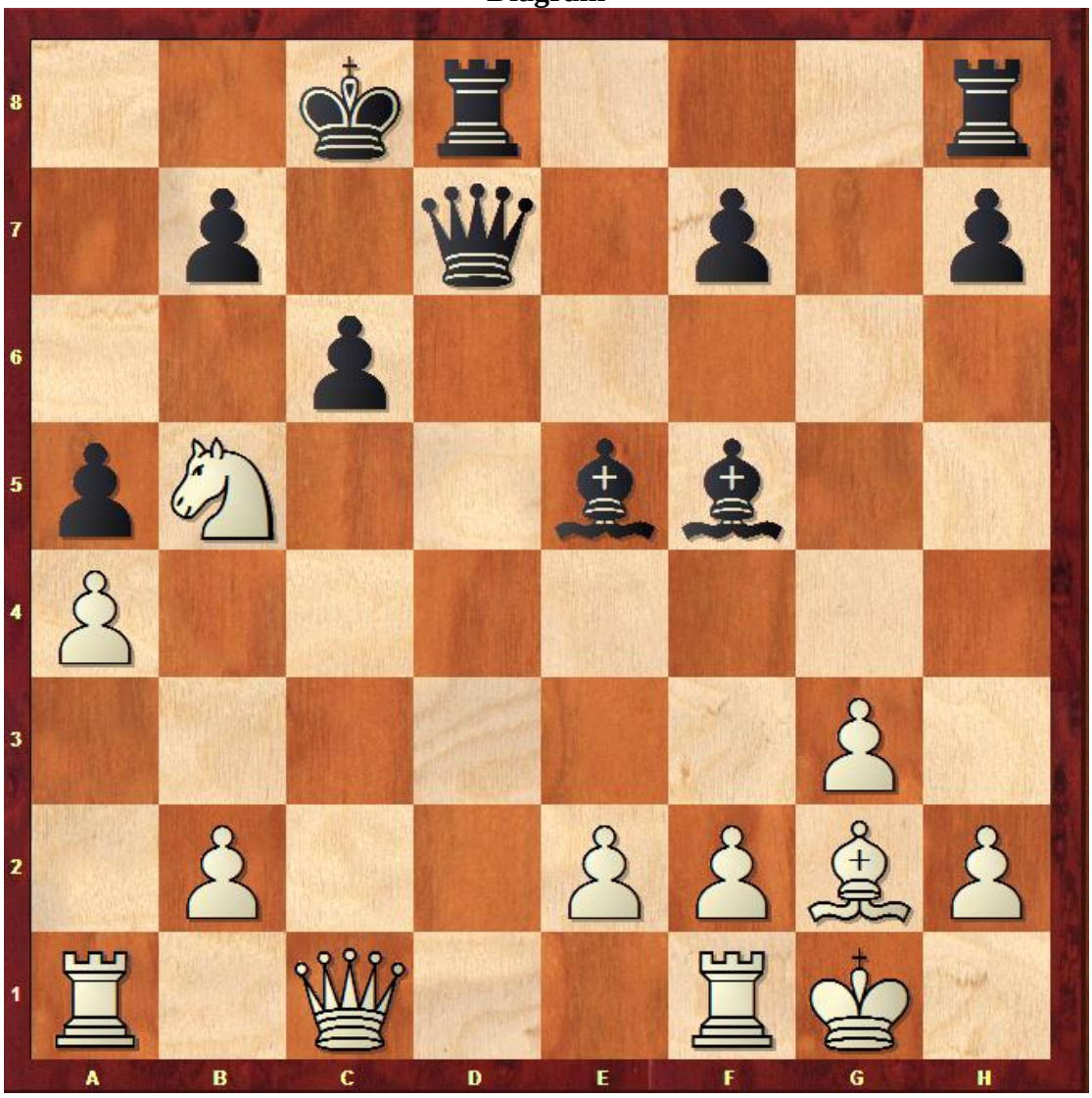
12...0–0 13.b3 Qc7 14.Bb2 Rad8 15.a3 a5 16.Ne5 Nxe5 17.Rxe5 b6 18.Nf3 Bc5 19.Qd2 Ng4 20.Ree1 d3 21.Rf1 Qd6 22.Qc3 f6 23.Rad1 Rfe8 24.Rd2 Bf5 25.Ng5 Ne3 26.fxe3 Bxe3+ 27.Kh1 Bxd2 28.Qxd2 Re2 29.Qc3 Rxg2 30.Kxg2 d2 31.Rd1 Bg4 32.Nf3 Qd3 0–1

Kramnik, Vladimir (2809) – Morozevich, Alexander (2742) [D17]
Amber-rapid 11th Monte Carlo (5), 21.03.2002

And here is the final position for this lesson. It's the game between Kramnik and Morozevich; both of them are world top chess players.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5 Nbd7 7.Nxc4 Qc7 8.g3 e5 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Bf4 Nfd7 11.Bg2 g5 12.Nxe5 gxf4 13.Nxd7 0–0–0 14.Qd4 Qxd7 15.Qxf4 Bd6 16.Qc1 a5 17.0–0 Be5 18.Nb5

Diagram



Black's turn

It's Black to play. I would like to ask you a question about Black's move, Qe7. Let's say that, for some reason, you decide to play that move. What do you think about it? Is it safe or not? You already know the right way of thinking; you need to check the attacking replies of your opponent, asking yourself: How can my opponent go forward to my territory and take or attack something?

If you think about this, you will notice that, just as usual, there are not many attacking moves that your opponent can possibly execute. Particularly, after Qe7, if we talk about checks, there is the move Na7+; and, if we are talking about captures, there is Bxc6. So, those are the 2 moves on Black's half of the board that White can execute. And, before playing the Qe7 move, definitely Black has to check those 2 aggressive replies of White to make sure that Qe7 is safe and is not losing for Black.

So, if you are playing a game like this, first of all you need to check: What if White captures the pawn with Bxc6? What is going to happen next? You will recapture, bxc; and then, White recaptures with the queen, Qxc6+, which makes check to your king. Let's say you retreat, Kb8, and White can play Qb6+. Even though it looks a bit scary, it's not losing actually directly, because you can play Qb7; but nevertheless, definitely, it still exposes your king and you need to think twice before going into a line like this.

All right, that was one option. Now, let's go back to the starting position for the calculations. We have just checked the move of Bxc6, but there is also one more move, which is Na7+, and this is a check. We always need to calculate the forcing moves of our opponent; so, let's see what happens if White plays Na7+.

Now the king goes somewhere (Kb8) and, at this point, you may notice that there is a combination that White can execute, which actually happened in the real game: it's Nxc6+, bxc6 and then Qxc6. As a result of this combination, White grabbed 2 pawns for a knight, but more importantly, along the g2-a8 diagonal, he now prepares a very dangerous attack against Black's king and it's really not easy for Black to stop it somehow.

He played Ka7 in the real game and White played Qb5, which was winning. But the computer shows here that there was an even more straightforward way for the win, which was to play Rac1, bringing the least active piece into play and preparing Rc5 to capture then the a5-pawn, which would be deadly for Black.

And, if Black tries to stop it, somehow, by playing Bd4 to control that c5-square; White will reply with Qb5, with a double attack over Black's f5-bishop and the a5-pawn; and White is just winning. Kramnik won in a little bit different way, but anyway, he won the game in a somewhat similar manner.

Let's just come back to the very beginning position of this example. As you may notice, a little bit funny thing is that all this attack of White happened just because Black played Qe7, which left the c6-pawn unprotected. Therefore, all the combinations were enabled in fact by Black rather than by White. And it happened because Morozevich forgot to make the anti-blunder check. He forgot to ask himself: What are the attacking replies that my opponent can play?

As you can see, even the very top players in the world fall into this trap of forgetting to make the anti-blunder check. But now, you know the right way of thinking and I'm sure that if you follow it, you will never fall into such annoying mistakes; and will ensure your stable progress and your great results.

While playing a game of chess, it's important to develop this anti-blunder thinking. After your opponent plays a move, you need to ask yourself: What is his idea? This helps you detect whether your opponent's move is dangerous for you or not, and whether you need to take any actions against it. After that, you start thinking about your move.

And, once you came up with a certain idea, a certain move that you are going to play, before playing that move on the board, you need to check whether it is safe. For that,

you ask yourself the question: What attacking replies can my opponent play? This ensures you do not make any oversight and your opponent does not have any powerful move that can damage your position significantly, such as winning your material or attacking your king. Once you are sure that your move is safe, you go ahead and play it.

I know, at first sight, it seems like this anti-blunder check is something complex and may take a lot of time, but in reality it's not the case. After a little practice, you will realize that it only takes a few seconds. At the same time, it ensures that you never make oversights and, therefore, your results will be stable, your progress will be steady and you will always be going up in your rating ladder and in your chess improvement.

18...Qe7 19.Na7+ [19.Bxc6 bxc6 20.Qxc6+ Kb8 21.Qb6+ Qb7]
19...Kb8 20.Nxc6+ bxc6 21.Qxc6 Ka7 22.Qb5 [22.Rac1 Bd4 23.Qb5]
22...Bc8 23.Qxa5+ Ba6 24.Rac1 Rc8 25.b4 Bc7 26.Qf5 Rhe8 27.b5 Bb7 28.Bxb7 Kxb7 29.Qd5+ Kb8 30.b6 Bxb6 31.Rb1 Qe6 32.Qxe6 Rxe6 33.a5 Rcc6 34.e3 1–0

Conclusions

Anti-blunder Check.

1. After an opponent's move, check if it's dangerous. Ask yourself:

"What's his idea?"

2. Before playing your move, check if it's safe.
   Ask yourself:

"What attacking replies can he play?"

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Lesson 8 - Practice

Welcome into the final video lesson of the course "7 Keys to Victory". This final video is dedicated to practice. Now, you already know all the main strategic principles of the game of chess. And, in this lesson, you'll put them in practice, so that, when you start playing your practical games, and it's your move, you'll know exactly what you should be doing.

It's going to be a pretty cool examination for you because we are going to see the games of Garry Kasparov and you'll be analyzing his moves. I will be asking your opinion: How would you play in those positions? And you will try to guess the moves played by Garry Kasparov, who is one of the best chess players of all times.

But, before we go to this practical task, let's just quickly recap the whole thing that we've been studying in this course. We have analyzed the "7 Keys to Victory", which are the 7 most important principles of playing a game of chess.

Of course, there are many other rules, but these seven are the most critical; and, if you follow them, you'll already be able to find good or, at least, decent moves in the vast majority of chess positions. In order to simplify it further for you, let's systematize these 7 keys and put them under a certain system, so that you not only know those 7 rules, but you also know exactly how you should apply them well while playing a game of chess.

The most important principle of the chess game is “The Principle of Attack”. Therefore, when it's your turn, the first thing you should check is whether you can play an attacking move. Do you remember the question that you need to ask yourself? It's the question: How can I move forward to the opponent's half of the board and take or attack something there?

You are happy to attack whatever you wish in the opponent's position: you can attack the opponent's king or the opponent's material; that is great! Or, at the very least, you can gain in activity, if you can make an attacking move and force the opponent to defend, to go backward: that is already a certain advantage that you can gain out of your attack. Therefore, if you can attack and get a certain advantage either in material or in activity; then, you should go for it and you should make your attacking move.

At the same time, in a lot of the chess positions, you can not play an attacking move right away. In that case, you will have to do something else and here is where the other principles of the chess game will come into play. If you can't attack, then you think about how you can gain activity, so that you can start attacking later in the game.

When we are talking about activity, there are those several principles that we were discussing during this course. When we talk about activity, you can either increase the activity of your forces or decrease the activity of the opponent's pieces. And these two tasks are equally important for you. Therefore, you may choose either of the principles to follow. For example, if you like to take care of your activity, then you'll use “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” to decide which piece must make a move now. Then, you move it to the most forward available square toward the center;

and that's how you follow "The Principle of Maximum Activity" and "The Principle of the Center". They help you detect where your piece should go. That is how you can increase the activity of your position.

Again, the greatest idea behind this full concept of activity is that you would like to put your pieces on positions where they attack the greatest quantity of squares on the chessboard because that would enable them to put an attack on one of the opponent's pieces or pawns later in the game.

Alternatively, you can try to decrease the opponent's activity; and here "The Principle of Neutralization" and "The Principle of Limitation" come into play. If there is an opponent's piece that comes into your half of the board, this intruder is really irritating and you want to get rid of it. That's "The Principle of Neutralization". In addition to that, in general, you would like to limit the opponent's activity as much as you can. You would like to attack his pieces and force them to go backward; kick them out of the center and make them as passive as you can.

Although, at first sight, it may seem hard to keep in mind these 5 principles of activity; it's not that difficult because, in reality, all of them are talking about the same thing, about activity; which basically means that you wish to move your pieces forward, towards the center and keep your opponent's pieces out of the center and backward. That's pretty much it!

Finally, while trying to detect the best move and come up with a good plan for you, you should never forget about your opponent, who also tries to come up with his plans to damage your position and, therefore, **you should be careful not to overlook the opponent's threats. And for this, we have the "Principle of the Anti-blunder Check".** It means that when your opponent just plays his move, the very first thing that you should do is to ask yourself: What is his idea? You try to understand why the opponent played his move.

You can also ask yourself: What is he going to do next? In this way, you are trying to detect what the real idea behind his plan is and what he is going to do. Then, you decide whether it's dangerous for you or not, and you take this information into consideration while starting to think about your move. So, once you've detected the opponent's idea, then you start thinking about your move.

This is what we have been discussing earlier. You try to attack, if it's possible you do this; if it's impossible, then you just activate your position. Finally, when you've decided which move you are going to play, before playing this move on the board, you would like to check whether it is safe. At this point, you need to ask yourself: What attacking replies can my opponent play?

By doing so, you make sure that the move that you intend to play is safe: that you're not losing anything, that you're not losing any material or not enabling your opponent to execute any powerful attacking moves. Once you make this final anti-blunder check, and you know that your move is safe, you can safely play it on the board.

I understand it may seem a little bit complex to keep in mind all those things, even though, after some practice, you will definitely be able to execute all this thinking

quickly because, in reality, it takes only some seconds to do that. Those anti-blunder checks are just a matter of a few seconds. Just ask yourself this one question quickly and then, when it comes to finding your best move, again, those principles are basically about going forward and attacking something.

So, if you want to just take away a certain one most important idea of the chess game, then, just focus yourself on the attack: try to attack your opponent. If you cannot do it right now, prepare your attack in the following moves. If you focus yourself in this one most important idea of the game of chess, you will already start playing well.

Kasparov, Garry - West, Guy [B29]
Telechess ol1 7778, 1977

This is a game between Kasparov, playing White; and West, playing Black. What do you think? What is the best first move for White? Of course, there are many moves that White can play, but the best moves are either e4 or d4. Both these moves follow "The Principle of the Center" and, at the same time, follow "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" because they enable lots of your pieces to start taking part in the game.

If White plays e4, that enables your bishop to control a certain diagonal, the queen to control a certain diagonal and gives some extra space for the king and the g1-knight. Therefore, e4 is one of the 2 best moves for White in the beginning position.

1.e4

Black replied with

1...c5

the Sicilian Defense. He's also trying to fight for the center, preventing White from pushing his pawn to d4. Now, it is White to play, and he obviously needs to develop his pieces; so, what do you think? Should White move his knight or his bishop? What do you think? I know that this is just a theory and, therefore, you may say: "Hey, why should I think here?

They're just book moves. I can just play the moves that I know". Yes, indeed. You might have seen such games in the past, you probably have seen the moves –the Sicilian Defense is one of the most popular chess openings. But I just want you to really understand deeply the meaning of every single move of the chess game. Because then, if you can realize that you can understand every single move from the game of Garry Kasparov, then you can just see how deep your strategical understanding is.

All right, so, if you have a choice between moving your bishop or a knight, "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" comes into play. The bishop is already active, the knight is still totally passive and, therefore, you should move the knight. That was what Kasparov did by playing

2.Nf3

Black played

2...Nf6

After the opponent's move, what should you ask yourself? The first thing is: What's his idea? What is he going to do next? So, what's Black's idea? Why did he play Nf6? He creates a certain threat, he's going to capture your e4-pawn and, definitely, you need to address this threat somehow. You don't want to lose your material. The next question is:

How should White play here? And, let me ask you this question: What do you think? How would you play here as White? The first most important guiding idea of the chess game is the idea of attack. And if you can attack, you can go forward to the opponent's half of the board and attack something; this is usually the way to go. Therefore, the best move for White would be pushing the pawn to e5 and attacking Black's knight. In the game, however, Kasparov played

3.Nc3

which is the second best move. By the way, pretty often, people ask me this question: Why do the strong players violate the principles that we are talking about? Well, there could be a lot of reasons. First of all, on the top level, the players really try to get away of the opponent's home preparation because this is very deep and, definitely, they don't want to let their opponent use those hours that they spent analyzing certain positions.

And there could be many other reasons. Sometimes, they just play the move which they think is the most unpleasant for the opponent, which may confuse them or scare them or whatever. So, there could be a lot of reasons.

But let's just not deviate to this psychological or preparation stuff. When you play a game of chess, just try to follow the 7 key principles and that will be good enough. All right, let's go next. Black played

3...e6

By the way, what do you think about this move? Was this the right thing to do for Black? First of all, you know that in the opening it's important to develop your pieces; and Black had a good move to play, which was Nc6, developing the knight. In the opening, you should develop knights before bishops, following "The Principle of the Least Active Piece".

And the second problem of Black is that, once again, he just ignores White's opportunity to push his pawn forward and to make then a second move; and it's a bad thing for Black to not care about the opponent's threats.

4.d4

The e5 move was the best option for White indeed, just like it was in the previous move. However, Kasparov still didn't play it; instead he played d4, which is also fine.

Another little remark that I would like to make is that, in general, while playing a game of chess, don't try to overcomplicate things for yourself. Chess is not a mathematical task, and, often times, there are many moves which are all fine. And, therefore, instead of thinking hard and trying to find the single best move; in reality, you have a number of options which are all pretty good; and you can just safely play any of them. All right, Black captures with the pawn,

4...cxd4

What do you think? Should you recapture with the knight or with the queen? That's a little bit tricky question, by the way. Because, we know that, generally speaking, when you need to decide which piece should make a move now, you must follow "The Principle of the Least Active Piece". And, after following that principle, then it's actually the queen which should make the move because the knight has already been developed and already took part into this game, and the queen did not.

However, in this particular position, if you captured on d4 with the queen, there would be a problem, that Black could reply with Nc6, attack your queen and gain an extra tempo for his development; and, at the same time, force your queen to retreat. That is the reason why the Qxd4 move simply does not work. However, if there were no Nc6 move, then Qxd4 would be the best option for White. In this position it doesn't work and, therefore, White just captured with the knight.

5.Nxd4

Black played

5...Bb4

By the way, Black still violates the principle of development, "The Principle of the Least Active Piece" because he should have developed the knight first. The bishop was already active.

Anyway, let's focus now on the white side and see what White should be doing here. First of all, we've got to ask ourselves the question: What is the idea of the opponent? What is he going to do next? What do you think about it? What was the idea behind Black's Bb4 move? He imposed a pin on your knight and he would like to capture your pawn in the following move; that is his threat that you would like to address.

And, I will not ask you what White should be doing here because that's the move that we've been discussing a couple of times already, you've got to move forward and attack. That's the e5 move. Kasparov finally played it:

6.e5 Nd5

attacking White's c3-knight at the same time; therefore, White needs to protect it, so he played

7.Bd2

White could have also protected this knight with the queen, but in the opening, usually, we try not to develop the queen too early, unless there's a certain good and advantageous reason, because the queen can be attacked by the opponent's minor pieces.

7...Nxc3

Now, there is a choice for you, you can take with the pawn or with the bishop. Although it may seem like a hard choice at first sight; in reality, if you keep in mind that the key idea of the game of chess is the idea of attack, then you can find the right move easily. If White captured on c3 with the bishop, that would be just an exchange. But if you capture with the pawn, that attacks the opponent's bishop; so therefore, this is an attacking move, which is great!

8.bxc3

Black played

8...Bf8

What do you think about this move? According to “The Principle of Maximum Activity”, we should try to go forward and not to go back. Of course, Black does not want to lose the bishop; therefore, it has to retreat, but suddenly, it shouldn't retreat so far away, just to its original position. We understand that Black was probably worrying about White playing Qg4 and attacking on the kingside. But, anyway, it's not a good enough reason for Black to play such a passive move as Bf8. Now, it's White to play and you're emulating Garry Kasparov.

Let me ask you this question: Which piece should make a move now? What do you think? First of all, you check if you have any attacking moves. In this position, there is no direct attack that you can play; and in that case, you start taking care of your development. You follow “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” and you bring it into play. So, White played

9.Bd3

Here the bishop is pretty active: it controls the two diagonals and it can attack in both directions, which is a good thing for White. By the way, let's just make a last note here: According to “The Principle of Maximum Activity”, you may be wondering why White didn't move the bishop to b5 or to c4. Well, if you thought about those options, that's a good thing, first of all. But the Bb5 move does not really work because Black can kick away this bishop right away (with a6).

And the Bc4 move was actually an option, but here the problem is that the e6-pawn significantly limits the activity of White's bishop; and also Black can try to kick this bishop away, by playing Qc7. Therefore, in this particular position, Bc4 was not

really the best option for White; Bd3 could have been a better option because really it's the most active square for the bishop. Black played

9...d6

Now, let me ask you one more question here: If Black wants to move his pawn, then where should it normally go? As far as possible, it should go to d5. And, once again, in general, you would like to take care of your pieces, first of all. Black could have played something like Nc6, instead. You can see that Black keeps playing not the best moves all the time.

All right, now there's another question for you: Should White capture there on d6 or not? If he did it, that would help Black develop his bishop and, we know that, generally speaking, we would like to keep the opponent's pieces out of the game, keep them backward. With that in mind, Kasparov played

10.Qe2

following “The Principle of the Least Active Piece” and bringing the queen into play. Black played

10...Nd7

Diagram

White's turn

once again, violating "The Principle of Maximum Activity". If Black wants to move the knight, it should go forward to c6. Anyway, he played Nd7 and that enabled White to make some combination right away. Let me ask you to think about that and, if you can find the combination that Kasparov played, which actually won the game within just a few moves. If you know how to find attacking moves, that makes your task a lot easier!

You need to focus your attention on the opponent's half of the board and ask yourself: How can I take or attack something there? With that in mind, Kasparov found a brilliant strike

11.Nxe6

The thing is that if Black tries to recapture the knight, 11...fxe6, then White can continue attacking Black's king directly, starting from 12.Qh5+; and then, the king goes to e7, which is losing due to Bg5, which is almost a checkmate and Black would suffer there significantly.

So, let's take a step back, if Black plays 12...g6. It does not really change the situation because White can sacrifice the bishop, Bxg6+, hxg6, Qxg6+, and after that, once again, it reaches a somewhat similar position in this variation. All of these are the forcing moves that White can play on Black's half of the board. In the actual game, it didn't happen. Let's come back a few moves backward.

11...Qb6

Black didn't take the knight, he just retreated with the queen, which is certainly a sign of resigning because White just grabbed the pawn, and Black simply let him do this. So, here White can do whatever he wants. He is already at such advantageous position with an extra pawn, and attacks the opponent's king. But anyway, Kasparov found a fascinating way to finalize the game on the spot. He played

[11...fxe6 12.Qh5+ Ke7 *(12...g6 13.Bxg6+ hxg6 14.Qxg6+ Ke7 15.Bg5+)* 13.Bg5+]

12.Nc7+

with a double attack on the opponent's king and the rook. And, once Black captures, Qxc7, White makes a discovered check, exd6, and at the same time Black's queen is under attack, so Black just resigned. **1–0**

It's a brilliant game by Kasparov. But, as you can see, if you know the right principles, all of White's moves are only natural for you! And the last thing I want to mention here is that if you also think about Black's moves, you can realize that, during this game, almost every move of Black was a mistake, even though the black player was representing Australia in a match against Russia, so he is not a beginner player, he is a very experienced guy.

You can see that he doesn't know the basic strategic principles of the game of chess, and he played bad moves all the time. So, that just shows you how strong you can play if you know these "7 Keys to Victory". In this game, if you managed to find at least some of the moves played by Kasparov, this is already a great accomplishment, because, in this game, Kasparov had a lot of time to think about his moves, while I only gave you a few seconds for consideration.

So, if you can emulate Kasparov's moves within only a few seconds of thinking, that is a great sign that you really digested the rules we were talking about; and with a little more practice, you'll strengthen your knowledge further! That is why I greatly encourage you to go to the practical part of the course, where you'll find some tasks that you can examine and perform. And, if you do this, you'll strengthen really your understanding of this material and you will be able to apply it confidently in your practical games.

Once again, thanks for your attention. It was really my great pleasure to talk to you during these video lessons; and I'm looking forward to see you in the practical part, where you can polish your skills further.

Practical Part

INSTRUCTIONS

The video lessons of the course, "7 Keys to Victory", give you a lot of useful knowledge. It's highly recommended that you watch these video lessons **SEVERAL TIMES**. This will help you digest and automate the skills that separate the amateurs from the pros.

Now it is necessary to put the knowledge received into practice. This practical addition to the course will help you do so. I am giving you the training program which accurately explains exactly what you should do.

Remember, **you MUST train and automate these skills (especially your thinking process) before you can use them in real games.**

What will this practical part give you?

- ü You will understand the ideas of the course better.
- ü You will remember the ideas of the course better.
- ü And the main thing: you will start putting the course's ideas into practice. Thus, you will acquire these practical skills fully.

The practical course contains nine tasks. Each of them is in a different folder. A separate instruction accompanies each task. You should carry out all of these tasks consistently (from 1st to 9th), following the corresponding instructions.

NOTES:

- In each task, you will see that it is White's or Black's turn.
- Remember that you should focus on the quality of your training, not on the quantity of work performed.
- Do not use computer engines while performing these tasks. In order to train your skills, you should think for yourself.
- If something is not clear to you –watch the video lessons once again.
- Even if any task seems simple to you –I strongly recommend that you perform it seriously.
- The chess games are in *.pgn format. Any chess program can open this.
- You should think about every single position for not less than 3 minutes and not more than 15 minutes.
- In most tasks, you will need to find the next move in a given position. Then you will study the answer. While looking at the answer, I recommend you to go over the whole game (not only the first move). These games are very instructive and you can find a lot of useful ideas in them.

Now you should start performing the tasks:

1. **Read the instruction (from the relevant file) for a certain task.**
2. **Go to the folder with chess games/puzzles.**
3. **Go to the folder with chess games/tasks.**

While performing these tasks, you will encounter a lot of positions where you need to find the following move. Please take note of **the main purpose of such training: you should THINK about it, APPLY the general ideas (from the video lessons) and UNDERSTAND more deeply how these ideas work practically.** These ideas can help you find the answers to the puzzle positions.

While you often need to find the best move in a certain position, your main goal is NOT simply to detect the right answer. Your objective is **to train your correct system of thinking.**

Please don't be upset if you can't find the solution to all tasks: after all, "no pain, no gain!" **☺The HARDER and SMARTER your training, the GREATER your progress!**

Good luck!
GM Igor Smirnov

The Practical Part: Task 1

The first part of the practical course is about **Attack and Material**.

Attack whenever possible. Attack all opponents' forces: attack his king, pieces and pawns. Capture pawns and pieces if possible.

Open the file "Task-1" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-1" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 2

In this topic, you'll train on the very important chess principle; **Least Active Piece.**

When you need to decide which piece should make a move now –find your least active piece.

Open the file "Task-2" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-2" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 3

In this topic, you'll train on **Maximum Activity.**

When you need to decide where to move your piece, move it to the most forward square.

Open the file "Task-3" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-3" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 4

In this topic, you'll train on **Neutralization.**

If there's an opponent's piece or pawn on your half of the board –neutralize it (push it away, exchange it).

Open the file "Task-4" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-4" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 5

In this topic, you'll train on **Limitation.**

Restrict the activity of the opponent's pieces. Blockade his pawns.

Open the file "Task-5" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-5" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 6

In this topic, you'll train on **Center.**

Fight for the control over the central squares. Occupy the center with your pawns and pieces.

Open the file "Task-6" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-6" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 7

In this topic, you'll train on **Anti-blunder.**

- After opponent played his move – ask yourself: "What's the idea of the opponent's move?"
- When you decide which move you are going to make, before playing this move on the board, ask yourself: "What attacking replies can my opponent play".

Open the file "Task-7" and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file "Answer-7" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical Part: Task 8

In this topic, you'll train your **Analytical Skills**.

It's very important to implement all the 7 key principles on your game. In order to do that, you need to train this skill. First, you need to analyze the games by yourself and, then, you need to open the files with the solutions in order to check if your analysis was correct.

Open the file "Task-8" and try to analyze the game by yourself.

Then, open the file "Answer-8" and check the solution and the game.

The Practical part: Task 9

Based on the previous task (8) it's important to learn how to analyze your own games. Please select 5 of your games and try to analyze them by the standards you learned from this course. Try to find when you followed these 7 key principles and when you break the rules. In this way, you'll make huge progress and you'll definitely learn and use all these 7 keys to victory –the strategic principles– in your games. Then, you can enjoy a lot of victories!

Thank you very much for standing this course. We'll be in touch and we'll talk again in the next course.

With every good wish,

GM Igor Smirnov